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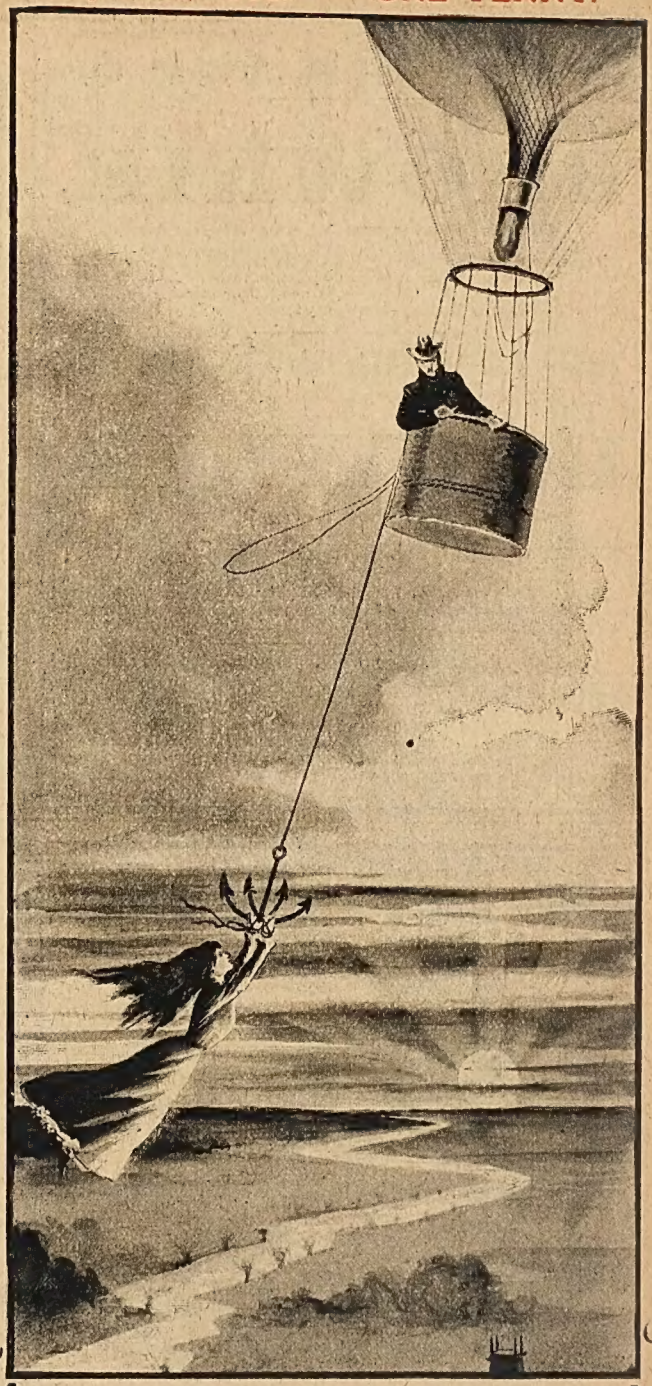

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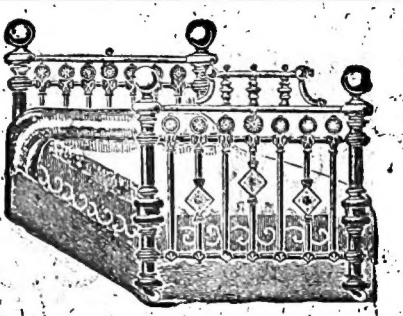

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 699.] For the Week Ending May 24th, 1902. [ONE PENNY.

OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION.

By HENRY FARMER.

Author of "Fettered Lives," "As a Man Sows," "In the Grip of the Law," etc.

If you Missed Last Week's Instalment, Read this Summary of the First Chapters.

JOHN MANSFIELD, a wealthy banker, Esther, his only child, Alec Scarsdale, his confidential clerk, and Seaton Revelle, a gentleman who had made the banker's acquaintance on the Continent, are seated together under the verandah of Mr. Mansfield's house, partaking of afternoon tea.

"It's an extraordinary thing that even in the privacy of one's home one can't get away from business," the banker was remarking. "Only this afternoon an utter stranger called upon me—a bearded, sunburnt fellow, just home from South Africa. . . . and took from round his waist a money-belt stuffed with bank-notes and diamonds, and wanted me to take charge of it. . . . He was so persistent that I agreed to lock the belt in my safe and return it to him on Monday."

The stranger informed the banker that he had made the pile in four years.

"Extraordinary!" said Seaton Revelle, "It will probably take him less than four years to spend it. Easily won, they say, easily lost."

Shortly afterwards Revelle writes a letter to a Benjamin Beard in London, which he posts himself. During his absence, Alec Scarsdale, who is treated by the banker almost as his own son, tells Mr. Mansfield of his love for Esther, and, with tears in his eyes, the old man gives the pair his fondest blessing.

That same evening, Esther and Alec go for a walk in the beautiful woods which are situated close to "The Woodlands," Mr. Mansfield's house. Their loving embraces are watched by Revelle, who silently chuckles as he thinks of the change which will shortly take place as a consequence of this important letter to London.

The next afternoon there is another meeting in the wood. This time between Seaton Revelle and a gentleman from London named Benjamin Beard. A whispered conversation takes place, and a little packet of powder passes into Revelle's possession.

"Half of that, Marquis, is quite sufficient to induce sleep," says Benny. A few more confidences, then, "Ta-ta, Marquis, till to-night." Revelle answers "Till to-night, Benny."

Later in the evening Mr. Mansfield, Scarsdale, and Revelle are seated in the smoking-room, enjoying cigars.

"Alec," said the banker, "it's about time I had my night-cap. Be a good fellow and mix it for me—you know my dose."

Scarsdale mixes drinks for all three.

A few minutes later, Revelle manages to drop some powder into the banker's glass.

"Well, gentlemen," presently remarks the banker, "I don't know how you feel, but I'm feeling remarkably sleepy. I say, Alec, what have you been doing with the whisky? It's left a curious taste in my mouth."

"I don't know. Mine tasted right enough," replied Scarsdale.

"My imagination, perhaps, or else I've over-smoked myself."

Late that night a figure cycles up to "The Woodlands," and waits below the dining-room windows.

Suddenly the window is noiselessly opened. "The old man's sleeping like a log, I've got the key." The voice was Revelle's and his listener Benny. Quietly the two men steal to the safe, unlock it, and extract the belt. Just then, Benny, in his excitement, knocks over a vase, and almost immediately footsteps are heard descending the stairs. An instant later, and Scarsdale, fully dressed, enters the room with a candle. But a tremendous blow from Revelle knocks him senseless.

"Go, Benny, go!" Revelle urges, "ride like the devil, I'm going to raise the alarm—it's my only chance."

To put the key in Scarsdale's hand, and the remaining half of the powder in his waistcoat pocket is the work of a moment. While Revelle is still bending over Scarsdale's prostrate body, the servants rush in, alarmed by Revelle's shouts. "One's escaped, but I've got the other," cries Seaton Revelle.

It was past four o'clock in the morning when Scarsdale was marched to the police-station, Esther alone believing him innocent, although the key and powder were found in his possession.

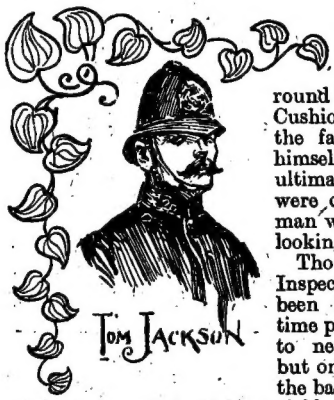
Next day the crime is the one topic of conversation in the district. In the "Crown and Cushion" no doubt is entertained that Scarsdale is guilty, but where is the other man?

Just then a stranger enters and the landlord eyes him suspiciously and secretly sends for the police. Two stalwart young constables arrive. One of them taps the stranger on the shoulder. The stranger looks up and his eyes sparkle with pleasure.

"Freddie!" he cried. "Well I never! So they've drafted you down here!"

"Uncle!" cried the young constable; then laughed loudly.

"Goodman," he continued, addressing the landlord, "do you know who this suspicious person is? He is Mr. Crump, late Chief Inspector of Scotland Yard!"



CHAPTER VI.

(Continued.)

A LOUD laugh went up from those assembled round the bar of the Crown and Cushion, in which, in spite of the fact that it was against himself, the worthy landlord ultimately joined. Then all eyes were centred on the quiet little man with kindly face. He was looking a trifle embarrassed now.

Though Mr. Crump, late Chief Inspector of Scotland Yard, had been in retirement for some time past, his name was familiar to nearly every soul present; but only his name, and those at the bar found it hard to believe that this homely-looking, amiable little individual was the famous Crump, the one-time terror of the criminal fraternity, and yet Cully Scott's best friend. Everyone promptly tried to get into conversation with him, and gather his opinions of the sensational crime of the previous night, and would have felt highly honoured had he permitted them to purchase him liquid refreshment. But Crump, after thanking everybody for their kind intentions, and having politely declined to discuss the robbery on the grounds that it was in far more competent hands than his own, and he had long since retired from business, wished everybody a cheery good-morning, and left the inn with the stalwart young constable who had been summoned to arrest him.

"Freddie," he said, with a twinkle of his eyes, "I enjoyed that little joke; but I think it was about time to clear out. The situation was getting a little embarrassing. Give a dog a bad name—you know, Freddie! My past is always haunting me. But now, my dear lad, I want to have a quiet chat with you. When do you come off duty?"

"I was just coming off when I was sent to arrest you!"

"Ah! Very well. Slip back to the station, get into *mufti*, and we'll have a stroll and a quiet chat"—and the little man's kindly face was beaming all over—"Meeting you like this, unexpectedly, Freddie, in spite of the fact that you meant running me in, is most delightful!"

"Same here, uncle!" said the stalwart young fellow. "If you don't mind waiting a couple of minutes for me, I'll slip off and change!"

"Certainly," said Crump, "and one moment! If you should have occasion to introduce me to anyone, don't drag in my past!"

And it was not affectation on the part of Crump. He was genuinely modest. He objected to be paraded about as late Chief Inspector of Scotland Yard.

The young constable hurried off. Crump followed him with his eyes.

"And it only seems yesterday," he muttered, "that you were a little mite, and used to come round to my rooms with your sister Katie, and I used to show you conjuring tricks! How time flies, to be sure!"

He gave a little sigh, then pursed up his lips.

"No!" he said to himself, shaking his head, "it's nothing to do with you. You've retired from business. Still, there will be no harm in getting full particulars from Freddie. From what I gathered from the landlord, I can't help thinking that this Scarsdale's motive was weak. But there I go again! My old, unfortunate habit, jumping at conclusions without waiting for the facts. It's a merciful thing that I retired when I did!"

He shook his head again.

"Dear me! And the poor girl—that's so pathetic!"

Then the kindly face brightened up.

"Ah, here comes Freddie! What a strapping young fellow he is!"

And P.C. Wilton Z. 105, was a fine specimen of humanity. The bicycle having been left in the care of the ostler at the inn, the young constable and the veteran detective left the village for a quiet walk and talk.

"And now, Freddie," said the little man, after much conversation on homely and unprofessional matters. "Tell me about this burglary at the Woodlands!"

Wilton had been present when Alec Scarsdale had been charged at the police-station in the early hours of that morning. He gave a very complete account. Crump listened attentively.

"On that evidence," he said, "unless something fresh is brought to light between now and his trial, he is bound to be convicted. It is terribly—very terribly—circumstantial. In the eyes of a jury the weakness of motive will count for nothing in the face of such evidence. At the same time it is quite possible that he may be innocent."

Wilton looked at him with a little surprise.

"But you think he is guilty, don't you? No one doubts it at the station except Tom Jackson. It turns out he was in Mansfield's Bank as an office-boy before he entered the force, and saw a good bit of Mr. Scarsdale."

"And his reasons for believing in Scarsdale?"

"He showed Jackson a lot of kindness!"

"Then I respect Jackson very much for sticking up for him," said Crump, then, after a pause, "Do you know anything about this Seaton Revelle?"

"No. Only that he is a friend of the Mansfields. Why?"

"Well, my dear lad, if Scarsdale did not steal the diamonds and money, Revelle did. It is one or the other; but all the evidence is dead against Scarsdale. The real key to the whole matter is the unknown accomplice. You see, Scarsdale, according to you, tells precisely the same story as Revelle. He says that he was aroused by sounds, and went downstairs to see what was happening. But what will go against him are the facts that he was fully dressed; the drug was found upon him, and he mixed Mr. Mansfield's whisky; but for these facts it seems to me his story would have been quite as credible as Revelle's!"

"Yes," said Wilton, in spite of his infinite respect for Crump a little dubiously. "If you had the case in hand, what would you do?"

Crump's eyes twinkled a little.

"I should strain every nerve to collar the unknown gentleman, and I should make very searching inquiries into Mr. Revelle's past history. And depend upon it, all this is being done. The case is in far younger and abler hands than mine."

He paused for a moment.

"My day is over, and it's a good thing. But I am growing very interested in this case. I shall certainly go up to London for the trial."

It was a momentous decision!

CHAPTER VII.

A Friend in Need.

IT was broad daylight when, after having preferred the charge against Alec Scarsdale at the police-station, the banker and Seaton Revelle reached the Woodlands. Mr. Mansfield's first thought was of his daughter. Leaving Revelle, who retired to his room, he hurried into the study to find Esther still lying on the couch, beside her a grey-haired old lady, Mrs. Tilley, the housekeeper, and once her nurse—a dear, large-hearted old creature who worshipped the very ground that Esther trod upon.

"There, there, missie," she was saying as the door opened, "you mustn't grieve like this. P'raps it will prove to be all a mistake. There, there, you mustn't sob so! Come, missie, you'll catch your death of cold; let me take you back to your room."

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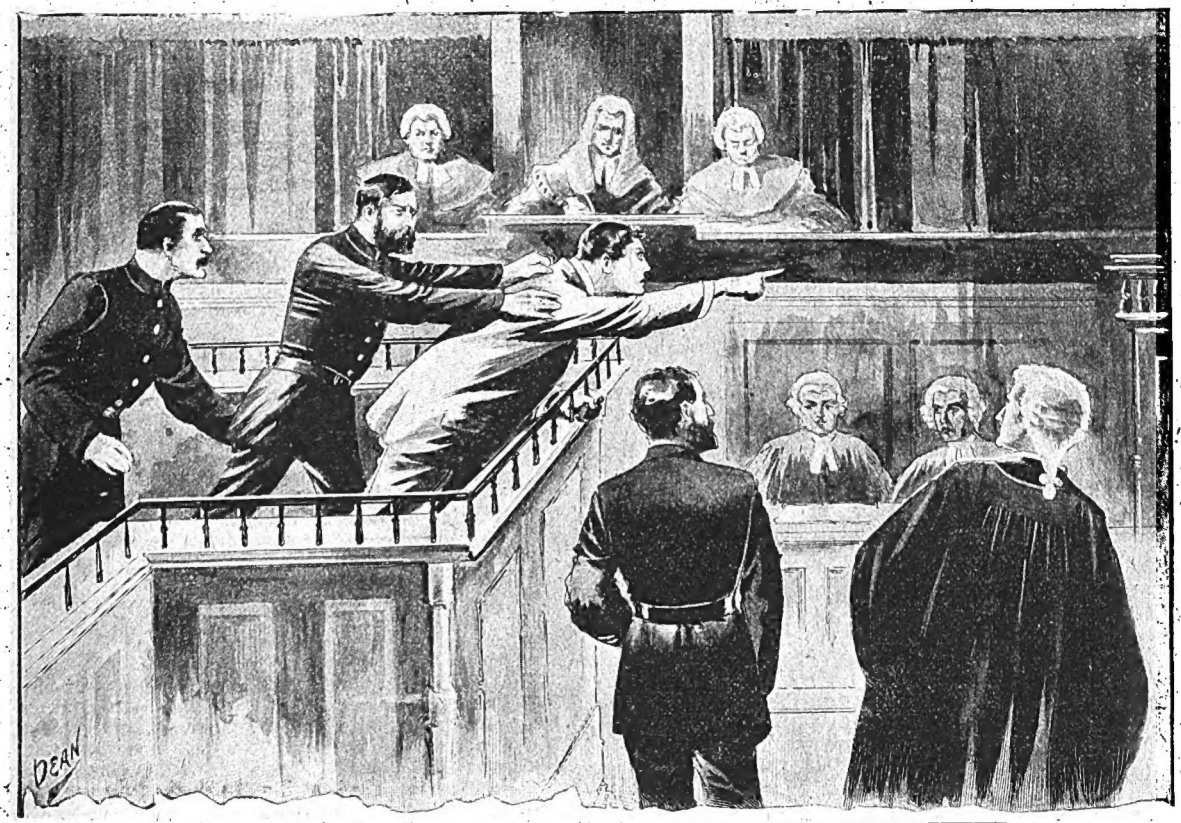
But the sobbing, instead of ceasing, became more piteous. And every sob only added fresh fuel to the burning hate that John Mansfield felt against the man whom he looked upon as the cause of all this misery. He was not an unkind man. Had there been any possibility of escaping from the conclusion that Alec Scarsdale was a thief and an unutterable scoundrel, he would have been only too thankful. But there was no getting away from the overwhelming evidence, and there is no hatred so great or so merciless, as that of a man who believes that he has been deceived. The sight of his daughter's grief maddened him.

"Esther," he whispered, as he knelt beside her, "what can I say to you, my darling? You must try to forget this," the word almost choked him, "this man! Let us be thankful

"I love him," she cried, passionately. "I trust him; why should he have done this? Was he starving—was he in need of money? You have known him for years. If he had been dishonest, there were a hundred opportunities"—her love had given her strength to reason. "Oh, father, can't you see that it is all a horrible mistake?"

As the hot words poured out, the door quietly opened, and Seaton Revelle stood on the threshold. As Esther's eyes fell upon the handsome, smooth face, the lightning thought flashed through her brain that it was this man, and this man alone, on whose word everything depended.

Was it possible—she took a backward step—that this man was lying to save himself? Her brain was working feverishly in a straining endeavour to find the truth. Either Alec was



"There"—and it was more a shriek than a cry—"there—that man, that man!"

that we have discovered his villainy now, though God knows, it has been a cruel and terrible shock. Esther, my darling, you must try to forget."

Raising her white, tear-stained face, she glanced up at him.

"Oh, father, don't speak like that. I'm sure it's all a horrible mistake. It must be. It cannot be true. You cannot believe that Alec could do such a thing. Father, tell me that you do not believe him guilty."

Mr. Mansfield honestly wished he could. He would have given half his possessions to have been able to say the words. He turned aside his face, that he might not see his daughter's pleading glance.

"No, I cannot, Esther, in the face of the evidence, the incontestable proofs, it is impossible. For your sake, for my own, I wish I could; but I cannot—I cannot!"

A sudden change had come over Esther. She sprang to her feet, her eyes blazing, her frame quivering with emotion

a criminal, and the man who now faced her, a deep look of concern on his features, had told the truth, or Alec was innocent, and his accuser an unutterable scoundrel. She believed, instinct told her that Alec was innocent, and yet she scarcely believed it possible that a man could be so vile as, without apparent reason, to swear away another's character and freedom. With a quick movement she pressed her hands to her forehead. She was so innocent herself; knew so little of the villainy of the seamy side of the world, that she inwardly reproached herself for such a thought. No, the man must have spoken what he thought to be the truth, and yet——

"Mr. Revelle"—she had not taken her burning eyes from off his face, but he did not flinch—"it cannot possibly be true! Remember what is at stake. A man's freedom, his character, perhaps, perhaps his life. An accusation like this is enough to break body and soul"—carried away by emotion, she seemed

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scarcely conscious of what she was saying—"say that you have made a mistake before it is too late, before his life is wrecked, and—and mine!"

There was a terrible intensity about her incoherent appeal. Seaton Revelle had momentarily dropped his eyes. He was tugging almost nervously at his moustache. Cool, hard as he was, he found it a trying ordeal. He wished he had stayed in his room.

It was harder to lie to this white-faced girl, with staring eyes that seemed to look into his very soul, than to those others. But the thrill of conscience was only momentary. He raised his eyes and met hers.

"Miss Mansfield," he said, in a low voice, "do you think I should have done what I have done unless I had been quite certain? Do you think I could be so vile as to allow an innocent man to be unjustly accused? I caught him in the act! Heaven knows, I am sorry enough for my share in this night's work. I wish it had fallen to someone else. I wish I had been a thousand miles away!"

He spoke as though it pained him to utter the words, and he knew well how to ring the changes of his well-tuned voice. A low moan escaped Esther's lips. She staggered to where Mrs. Tilley stood.

"Take me away," she murmured. "Take me away." And the old housekeeper, placing an arm round her, led her with motherly tenderness towards the door. As they passed him, Seaton Revelle held out his hand.

"Miss Mansfield, I cannot express my grief for what has happened. Will you forgive me for my unfortunate share in the matter?"

Their eyes met. There was something in his look that made her turn from him with a shudder.

"Don't speak to me," she whispered, in her grief scarcely knowing what she said. "Don't—don't touch me!"

Revelle turned white, and bit his lips. Had she some shadowy suspicion of the truth, or was it merely the action of a girl whose mind was partially unhinged by sorrow? A hand was laid on his shoulder.

"You must forgive her, Revelle," said John Mansfield, in a broken voice; "she doesn't mean what she says, my poor Esther, she has suffered terribly—if only I had the power to console her, comfort her. It has been a dark night for us all!"

When Seaton Revelle again reached his bedroom, he drew up the blind, and, having lit a cigarette, flung himself into an easy-chair.

"Not worth while going to bed," he muttered, glancing at the clock; "breakfast will be ready in a couple of hours; besides, I've one or two little matters to think over. So far, so good. It looked pretty nasty at one time, but chance did more for us than calculation. Only one little flaw, Scarsdale saw Benny; but my description will have more value than his, and—well, Benny will have to lie low for a little while. As to the pretty Esther, I fancy her confidence will be shaken when it comes to the trial; she doesn't know the nature of the evidence against her *fiancé* at present. It will pan out all right. Time, they say, is a great healer, and, well—a little patience should bring its own reward. By Jove, though, when she gave me that look, she seemed to stare straight into my soul!"

He laughed—rather uneasily, then flung his half-smoked cigarette into the grate.

"Women," he muttered irritably, "are more bother than they are worth. They always constitute an unknown element in the game. Every man is bound to be made a fool of, once in his life, by some woman or other"—he gave a smile that revealed his white, even teeth—"well, I've been salted. I wonder what's become of her?"

He leant back in his chair and stared out at the blue sky.

"Yes, I wonder what's become of her?"

The same sun that shone through the window upon Seaton Revelle, piercing through the narrow slit of the police-station cell, fell upon Alec Scarsdale pacing monotonously to and fro.

Now and again the trap in the door was drawn back, and a policeman stared in. But Scarsdale was so absorbed in his thoughts, that he scarcely heard the sound. Esther had told him she believed him innocent, but would her faith stand the tests that awaited her? His thoughts were more collected now; he was able to reason more clearly, and the more he thought of the damning evidence against him, the more hopeless the case seemed. If only he could see Esther, or even send her a message!

"Mr. Scarsdale!"

He started, and looked up as his name, softly whispered, came through the open trap.

"Mr. Scarsdale, for Heaven's sake don't make a noise, but it's me, Jackson. I've only just come in off my beat, and heard the news. I can't, I won't believe it true!"

A dazed look passed over Scarsdale's face. Springing up, he hurried across the cell to the door, and stared through at the honest face on the far side.

"You, Jackson! Why, I thought you were in London."

"Not so loud, Mr. Scarsdale. No; you see, Warham is in the area of the Metropolitan police, and I was drafted down here some weeks ago. When I heard it was you who had been arrested for the burglary up at the House, I couldn't believe my own ears—you, who were so good to me when I was a lad at the bank, who helped me when the poor mother lay dying; you, who helped me when I was tempted, and saved me from myself! I said to myself it couldn't be true. Quick, there's not a moment to spare, the sergeant will be here in a second. Can I do anything for you?"

It seemed almost as if Scarsdale's prayer had been heard.

"Have you a slip of paper and a pencil?" he whispered quickly. "Will you take a message for me?"

The young constable whipped out his pocket-book, tore out a sheet of paper, and, wrapping it round a pencil, passed it through the grating.

"Esther," wrote Scarsdale, "Heaven knows how it will all end, but before God, I am innocent—ALEC."

"Jackson, can you get that to Miss Mansfield?"

"Trust me. Look out, here's the sergeant!"

Jackson lowered the trap, and, concealing the slip of paper in his tunic, sprang back just as the door at the end of the passage was flung open, and the station sergeant appeared.

"What are you doing here, Jackson?" asked the sergeant abruptly.

"Just having a look at him," was the answer; and the sergeant, thinking him a zealous young member of the force, who wished to make himself acquainted with a suspected criminal for professional purposes, was satisfied.

Scarsdale gave a deep sigh of relief. Mentally tortured as he was, the thought that Esther would get his message, lightened the heaviness of his heart. He thanked Heaven for the coincidence that had brought Tom Jackson across his path. He had little dreamed when, a few years back, he had done a kindness to a young lad in the bank, how and when that kindness would be repaid.

* * * * *

"Beg pardon, miss, but perhaps you don't remember me?"

It was late afternoon. Scarsdale had been brought up before the magistrates, and had been formally sentenced to stand his trial at the Central Criminal Court. It was Mrs. Tilley, the old housekeeper, who had broken the news to Esther. "It was piteous to see her," the old lady had said, in the servants' hall. "If only she could have cried! But she stood there, white and silent, and the look in her dark eyes made my heart fairly bleed."

The news, though not unexpected, had numbed Esther.

For a long while she had sat alone in her room. Then an over-mastering longing had come over her. If she could only

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see him! She knew nothing of police routine. If she pleaded, told them who she was, surely they would let her see him? It was late afternoon when, her features thickly veiled, she had left the house. Absorbed in her thoughts, she had scarcely noticed the approach of the stalwart, neatly-dressed young man, who had stopped and addressed her. She looked at him wonderingly.

"No—I don't remember you!"

"I used to be in your father's bank, Miss, and I used to see you come in there. After that I gave up office work and joined the police."

"The police—have you come from the station? Can you tell me——"

Tom Jackson did not wait for more words. He gave her the scrap of paper with Scarsdale's words pencilled upon it. With trembling hands Esther unrolled it. A stifled sob escaped her as she read the message; then, with a feverish movement, she pressed it to her burning lips.

"Oh, I do believe him," she whispered half aloud, "oh, I do believe him. I must see him! Tell me, can I see him?"

Jackson shook his head.

"I'm afraid not, miss, unless you've an order signed by the magistrates, and it's not an easy thing to get. But if you'd like to write something down on a slip of paper, maybe I could manage to give it him."

"Yes, I will do that," said Esther quickly. Then, after a moment's pause, during which she suffered her eyes to rest on Jackson's honest face, "You—you—believe in him?"

Tom Jackson coughed, and drew the back of his hand sharply across his eyes.

"Miss," he said in a low voice, "when I was a youngster in the bank, I was once badly tempted. My mother was lying ill, nearly dying; my father—it's not for me to speak against him now—never did any work, and had been in drink for three weeks. I'd a little brother and sister, and the wages I was earning, try hard as I would, didn't go far enough, and the doctor said if my mother was to get well she must have good and nourishing food. I hadn't got the money, but—but there was money at the bank"—he paused for a moment, and then dropped his voice to a whisper—"but for Mr. Scarsdale I should have been a thief. I'd got the cash-box in my hand when he came into the room. No, he didn't send for the police, but he took me into his private office, and, to my dying day, I shan't forget what he said to me. I didn't attempt to excuse myself; I told him all. He made me promise that I'd fight against temptation in the future. That evening, when I got home"—there was a strange huskiness in the young constable's voice—"there was a hamper of good things for my mother, and a letter for me, inside it a five-pound note. Do you think, miss, after that, I dare believe him guilty?"

Esther, her heart too full for words, held out her hand. Tom Jackson took it; then, clumsily, but with a simple chivalry almost touching to behold, bent down and kissed it.

"Miss," he said, "if I can do anything for him, you can trust me; I've got a debt to wipe off!"

It is strange how barriers of reserve, of social difference, are swept away by a common feeling. The rich banker's daughter did not see before her a humble constable of the Metropolitan police, but a new-found friend.

Jackson had again brought out his note-book and pencil.

"Mr. Scarsdale shall get it this evening," he said, handing them to her. "Here, miss, there's no one about, just make a desk out of my shoulders!"

And, bending down, he presented a broad pair of shoulders for Esther to write upon.

Anyone, not knowing the circumstances, and coming along the road, might have smiled at the scene. Comedy and pathos are often strangely intermingled.

"Alec," wrote Esther, "whatever happens, I shall always believe in you. Oh, my love, if I could only see you. But hope, hope! I am going to try to solve this mystery. I have a horrible suspicion someone is working against you, wishes to ruin you! I have found a friend—the bearer of this—who I feel will help me. Once more, Alec, nothing shall shake my love and my belief. We must hope.—ESTHER."

That evening, Jackson managed to slip the note through the trap in the cell door. When Scarsdale had read it by the light of the guarded gas-jet, he feverishly pressed it to his lips.

It was like a draught of wine to him.

CHAPTER VIII.

Sentenced. A Face in the Crowd.

THE Warham robbery, the astounding facts connected with it as chronicled in the various papers, had caused a profound sensation, and had aroused the greatest excitement, not only in London, where the name of John Mansfield, the banker, was well-known, but throughout England.

Alec Scarsdale's name was on everybody's lips. The great British public had anticipated judge and jury, and had already condemned him. The array of facts against him was too formidable, too convincing, to admit of a doubt. That he had been in Mr. Mansfield's employ for several years, that he had been admitted into his complete confidence, only made him appear the more infamous. Even what should have been treated as sacred was ruthlessly dragged into the glaring light of publicity—his engagement to Esther Mansfield. One paper alluded to him as the man who, on one day, made love to the daughter, and, on the next, robbed the father.

The greatest curiosity prevailed as to the whereabouts of the missing man, the mysterious confederate who had escaped with the proceeds of the robbery, roughly estimated at ten thousand pounds. In spite of all efforts and rumours of clues, he was still untraced. A reward had been offered, and a description had been outside sundry police-stations, but the description was not that given by Scarsdale, but by Seaton Revelle, and his description was exactly the reverse of that dapper little gentleman yclept Benny Beard.

The Old Bailey was crowded to overflowing. Men and women had fought and struggled in their eagerness to get a place in the court. Heads were craned forward, and every eye was fastened on the empty dock. Then the low buzz of many voices broke into a loud murmur that all the cries of "Silence in Court!" could not still, as Scarsdale, two stalwart warders with him, passed up from the underground passage into the dock.

He was as white as a ghost, and looked frightfully haggard.

He heard the murmur and involuntarily glanced round, only to behold a sea of faces bent upon him unpityingly, eyes that glared at him as at some savage caged animal. He turned away again. His head sank forward, crushed down by the degradation, the horrible humiliation of it all. Then, with an effort, meaning to play the man, he flung it back almost defiantly.

"One look at him," said a man at the back of the gallery to his neighbour, a slim, dapper little person, who seemed content with his place in the background, "one look at him is enough to tell you whether he's guilty or not."

"Not a doubt about it," was the answer, "and, my eye! won't he get it hot when it comes to the sentence. Bless me if he hasn't pleaded 'not guilty'! Far better throw himself on the mercy of the court."

And the dapper little man scratched his clean-shaven chin.

Not very far away, jammed in tightly, was another little man, of homely and insignificant appearance. He might have been accommodated with a seat in the body of the court, being a late Chief Inspector of Scotland Yard, but Crump was essentially retiring. He preferred the obscurity of the gallery.

Had he been in a mood to reflect, the dingy, badly ventilated court might have recalled many sensational scenes in which he had played brilliant parts, but his whole attention was riveted on the prisoner.

When asked the question, Scarsdale pulled himself together and, in a low voice, said "Not guilty, my lord!"

Then the trial proceeded. The murmuring of voices gave way to a deep silence, as everyone followed the evidence with breathless interest—complete, damning evidence, that the counsel for the defence with all his cleverness could not shake.

But there was another murmur when Seaton Revelle, no emotion on his smooth, calm face, immaculately dressed, stepped into the witness-box. It was a murmur of admiration for the man who had caught the felon who now stood in the dock.

Scarsdale clenched his teeth as he glibly told his lying tale. Once their eyes met, and Seaton Revelle's lips curled with a contemptuous, scornful smile. In vain the counsel for the defence cross-questioned him; Seaton Revelle gave his answers with a cool deliberation, and never once contradicted himself.

It was all so much agony to Scarsdale to listen to the scoundrel who was lying away his freedom. But most of those in court saw in the quivering of lip and nostril the terror of the guilty man, who saw the proofs of his crime gathering round him, and closing up the crevices of escape.

"You have known the prisoner for some time, Mr. Revelle," said the counsel for the defence, "has there ever been any personal difference between you?"

Seaton Revelle looked coolly across the court at Scarsdale.

"I looked upon Alec Scarsdale"—he was speaking very deliberately—"as a personal friend, until——"

"Until? Go on, please, Mr. Revelle," said the counsel, for the witness had hesitated.

"Until I caught him in the act of plundering the safe."

A moment later, the unexpected happened in the shape of one of those scenes described in newspapers as "a sensation in court."

Scarsdale, already over-wrought and well-nigh driven mad, had lost all control of himself. As Seaton Revelle stepped down from the witness-box, he leant across the dock.

"You've lied," he cried. "Lied—lied—lied! Every word you've uttered has been a hellish lie!"

The outburst was so sudden, so abrupt, that the whole court was taken by surprise. Even Seaton Revelle for a moment seemed to lose his wonderful self-possession. A grey shadow crossed his features, and he took a step backward, as if he feared the prisoner would vault over the dock and fling himself upon him.

But the warders on either side of him had dragged Scarsdale back.

"Silence, prisoner!" cried the judge sternly. "Do you think to improve your case by such unseemly conduct?"

It was some time before order was again restored. And one evening paper, in a highly-coloured description of the affair, stated that so great was the feeling against the prisoner that, under any conditions save those of a well-regulated English court of law, he would have been in danger of being lynched.

Seaton Revelle did not leave, but, taking a seat in court, waited for the result of the trial. A slight smile, concealed by his moustache, played about the corners of his mouth as he listened to the powerful speech of the counsel for the prosecution. Every word he uttered seemed to drive a nail into the coffin of Scarsdale's freedom.

It was only when the judge had summed up, and the jury had retired to consider the verdict, that Scarsdale was allowed to sit down. He sank down like one in a dream, and covered his face with his hand.

Was it possible that he was a criminal in the dock? Even now, he half-expected to awake to find it all a horrible dream.

A low buzz of voices pervaded the court. The counsel for the prosecution was carrying on an amiable conversation with the counsel for the defence.

The public were discussing with bated breath, not the verdict—there could be no doubt about that—but the sentence.

Scarcely ten minutes had elapsed before the jurymen filed back into the box. One of the warders nudged Scarsdale in the back. He rose mechanically to his feet. He was white, frightfully white, but he had regained his self-control. He did not flinch when the foreman of the jury, in answer to the usual question, uttered the one word, "Guilty!"

Then the judge asked him if he had anything to say why sentence should not be passed. There was a pause, and a breathless silence. Every eye was fastened upon him, as, with a quick movement, he clutched at his collar as though it choked him. But when he spoke, his voice was clear, though low, and his words reached to the back of the court—to the clean-shaven man who sat there, and who shivered as he listened.

"Only this, my lord, I am innocent. Sooner or later, I believe the truth will come to light, and you will find that you have condemned an innocent man. Sooner or later, I believe that those who have tried to ruin me will be brought to justice." He paused for a moment, and glanced to where Seaton Revelle was seated. He did not meet that glance, but seemed engrossed in studying the signet ring on his little finger. "Before God I protest my innocence!"

"They all of 'em say that," whispered the man at the back of the gallery, "and I ought to know, seein' that I've hardly missed a trial for the last fifteen years."

"Hah!" said the clean-shaven man, "the judge's going to pass sentence. Look at his hatchet face. He's got a 'lifer' expression upon it."

"Alexander Scarsdale," said Justice Hoskins, in a judicial, almost expressionless voice, "after a fair and impartial trial you have been found guilty by a jury of your fellow-countrymen, and I entirely concur with the finding. Your previous good character, the fact that you are a man of education and intellect, only enhances the heinousness of your offence. Society must be protected against such men as you. The man who has had no education, who has been brought up among evil associates and surroundings, has at least some excuse. You have none. To the crime of robbery you have added the crime of ingratitude. Nor was it a crime of impulse, but rather deliberation. In passing sentence, I should not be fulfilling my duty as judge if I did not take these matters into consideration."

He paused for a moment. The silence was intense. One might have heard a pin drop. Seaton Revelle was nervously twirling round his ring. The prisoner had gripped the ledge before him. The warders had fastened their eyes on him. Prisoners had fainted before now when sentence is passed.

"Alexander Scarsdale, the sentence of this court is that you be sent to penal servitude for sixteen years!"

There was a burst of applause from the crowded court. Scarsdale staggered, swayed, and then, turning round, faced the public. Again he beheld the sea of pitiless faces.

Once sentence is passed, it is the custom of the warders in charge to take the prisoner out of the dock at once, in order to prevent the possibility of a scene.

But the men on either side of him were too late. For Scarsdale, staring wildly into the confused sea of swaying faces, had seen, away up in the gallery, but standing out with a vivid clearness, a face that had haunted him day and night—the face of the man he had seen that fatal night, standing beside the open safe.

"There"—and it was more of a shriek than a cry—"there—that man, that man!"

No one was looking at Seaton Revelle, or it would have been noticed that his face was as livid as the prisoner's.

"Let him speak; let him prove my innocence!" cried Scarsdale. He pointed a quivering finger up at the gallery.

And almost simultaneously with his action Crump turned his head sharply round!

(To be continued.)

(The incidents depicted in the little leaflets and on our covers of this and last week will be dealt with later.)

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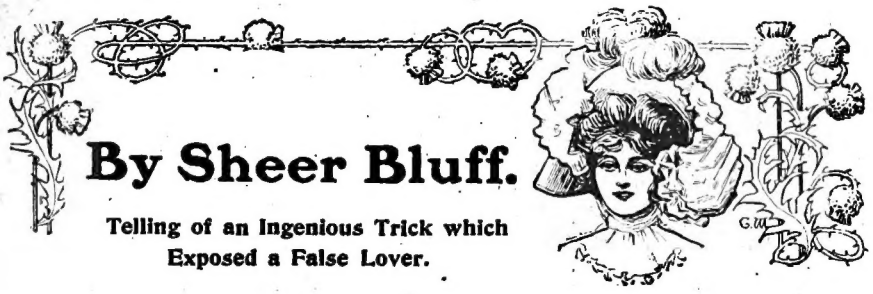

By Sheer Bluff.

Telling of an Ingenious Trick which Exposed a False Lover.

"You have just told me, Miss Winston, that you love me."

"I have—and it is true."

"And yet you say in the same breath that you can never be my wife?"

"Yes—and that is true also."

"But *why* will you not marry me, Flo?"

"Because I cannot. I have given my word to another."

Fred Denton threw the end of his cigar into the water with a gesture of disgust, and sat erect. Then he whistled long and softly. He and Flora Winston were cosily ensconced in a punt, hidden from vulgar curiosity behind a drooping screen of willow boughs.

It was the last day of a pleasant summer holiday, and to-morrow both were returning to town. They had passed three happy weeks in the enjoyment of each other's company. Flora—on the eve of marrying a crabbed old millionaire whom she detested—had been bent upon enjoying to the full her brief remnant of liberty. To Fred Denton, the artist, she had at first seemed a gay and attractive companion. Later, he had found her fascinating and irresistible.

Thus it came to pass that three weeks of sketching and boating in company culminated in Denton's proposal, and in his sudden realisation that the girl he loved was not for him. He sat moodily twirling the end of his dark moustache, with a slight frown on his forehead. He was unable to grasp the full significance of what his companion had just told him.

"I ought never to—to have let you say it," faltered the girl, as she saw her lover's perplexity. "But then—I did not know that you really *loved* me, you see. I thought that we—that we were only just amusing one another—perhaps."

Denton did not speak for a moment. Then he asked savagely:

"Who is the beast?"

"Mr. Quartz, the millionaire."

"But—you don't mean to tell me that you love *that* animal?"

"Oh—no, no!" cried Flora, smiling in spite of herself. "Surely you don't think me capable of that folly, Fred?"

"Well then, it's the money," said Denton, decisively, ignoring the question.

"No, Fred—it's *not* the money. Why do you persist in thinking me so mercenary?"

"Well then, if you don't love old Quartz, and if you don't want his money, why the—I mean, why on earth have you promised to marry him?"

"Oh, Fred—it was all my mother's fault."

"You mean?"

"That mother was so set upon getting me a rich man for a husband. She said it would be the best possible thing for me, because then I should get into all the smartest circles, you know."

"Well?"

"And then Mr. Quartz turned up. I know he thought me pretty, because he said—he said something. It was not very nice, but it meant that he thought me pretty. Then he asked me to marry him, and I promised."

"But *why?*" Denton almost shouted. "You are of age; there was no earthly reason why you should marry a man for whom you had no love, just to please your mother."

"Well—you see—there was no one else, and I knew mother would be awfully pleased, and—and—oh Fred, you don't know how that man bothered me!"

Denton muttered something under his breath. Then he said:

"But I don't see why all this should make you persist in marrying a man you don't love."

"Can't you understand, Fred? I did not love *anyone* when I promised to marry Mr. Quartz. So I thought that he might as well have me as anybody else. He seemed fond of me, you know. Besides, I knew how much it would please mother."

"Yes, but it seems to me that matters have changed since then. You love me—you have just said so. Why don't you throw over that ass Quartz, and marry me?"

"But I have pledged my word, Fred. You would not have me go back on that—would you?"

Denton bit his lip. He had not thought of this difficulty. He sat for a long time in silence, his brow knitted in a perplexed frown. At last something seemed to occur to him, for his face grew a little clearer.

"But supposing Quartz threw *you* over?" he asked.

"Oh!" cried the girl, catching her breath; "I *wish* he would. But I dare not hope for such good fortune. Mr. Quartz seems to have taken a real fancy to me, and he thinks that I should make him such a capital wife. 'Toothsome and tractable'—I heard him say *that* to mother the other day. And—and he laughed—horribly."

Denton seemed less affected by this intelligence than might have been expected. He took the girl's hands in his, and looked into her deep blue eyes. She returned his gaze with trustful confidence.

"Flo—you do love me, don't you?" asked Denton, earnestly.

"Why of course I do, Fred. I have told you so several times already."

"Then can you trust me? I mean—will you do what I tell you?"

"I trust you with my whole heart, Fred," answered the girl. "I don't think I should care for you a bit, otherwise. Yes, I will do whatever you wish, for I know that you would not make me do anything mean or dishonourable."

Denton snatched a kiss.

"Then I think I can promise that you will be a free woman within the week," he cried, triumphantly.

"Oh Fred!" exclaimed the girl, and her face spoke the thoughts that she could not frame in words.

"Yes, Flo," pursued Denton. "I have a little plan in my head which I think will prove effectual. From what you have told me, I believe that old money-bag only loves you because you have a pretty face. If you were old and ugly, I don't believe he'd care for you any more than—than he would for that cow in the meadow yonder."

"Oh, Fred—how horrid!" cried the girl, with a look of alarm.

Denton put his arm round her waist and drew her closer to him.

"Do not be afraid, dearest," he said; "I'm going to prove whether Quartz really does love you or not. If he does not love you for something more than your face, what I am going to do will make him throw you over."

And then Denton's voice sunk to a whisper as he told her his plan. When he finished speaking, Flora clapped her hands delightedly.

"I believe all that you have said is quite true, Fred," she cried; "and I think your plan will work beautifully—I am

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sure it will. I will make it. Yes—you *may* have another kiss, you dear boy, for being so clever!"

* * * * *

Two days later, Flora Winstone sat alone in the drawing-room of her mother's house in town. She held a note, inscribed in a large, ill-controlled hand. It was from her *fiancé*, the opulent Mr. Quartz. In it—after many endearing phrases, which Flora read with a disdainful curl of her pretty lips—he asked for a private interview. He declared that he had scarcely known how to pass the time during her absence from town. He protested that he wanted to see his "little ducksie" again so badly, and that he trusted the day was not now far distant when he should fold her in his arms and call her his wife. Indeed, he now wished her to name the actual day for the wedding. Would she be at home on the following afternoon, and would she arrange to see him privately?

Thus it came to pass that Flora sat waiting the coming of her lover. She was dressed in the daintiest of tea gowns, and looked as charming and fresh as a rose. But—and oh the pity of it!—across her pretty face ran a terrible scar. It stretched from her white forehead, blackened her eye, and passed across her right cheek to the corner of her mouth. Two days ago, when Fred Denton had kissed her, she had been as lovely as heart could wish. Now—with that frightful livid scar distorting her features—her appearance was actually repellent. Yet she did not seem to be in pain, for her manner was perfectly controlled and easy. Indeed—and this was a most remarkable fact—the appearance of the scar was such that an observer would have sworn that it was several weeks old.

When Mr. Quartz was announced, Flora rose from her seat and came forward smiling. The amorous millionaire advanced with open arms.

"My darling Flora!" he exclaimed, rapturously; "how I have longed for this moment! Kiss me, my love."

Then, for the first time, he looked into her face, and saw the scar.

"My God!" he cried; "what in the name of all that is horrible have you been doing to yourself, Flora? What—what an awful accident!"

He stood with his arms hanging limply at his sides. He seemed to have lost all desire to embrace her. Indeed, he drew a little aside as one does who wishes to avoid some disgusting object. Flora was silent for a moment; then she spoke slowly.

"I did not realise that I was so much disfigured as all that."

"Not disfigured?" cried the millionaire, wildly; "why it is absolutely disgust—I mean, I am most awfully sorry for you, I'm sure."

Flora smiled sweetly.

"Oh don't trouble about me," she said; "It really doesn't hurt at all, you know. Besides, I've got your love to comfort me, you see."

Mr. Quartz took out his handkerchief and began to mop his brow, for he was perspiring profusely. He stole another glance at the girl's pitifully disfigured face. Then he asked:

"Can nothing be done to—I mean, is it not possible that the scar may become less conspicuous with time?"

"I cannot say," said Flora, guardedly; "but—if it's as bad as you say—I am afraid it is always likely to show."

Her remark practically ended the interview. Quartz made one or two attempts to converse on topics of a general nature but his mind was evidently engaged with thoughts very different from those he was trying to utter. At last he took his leave without even offering to kiss the woman for whom he had so lately professed deep affection.

* * * * *

As soon as the millionaire was out of the house, Flora ran to her bedroom. When she returned to the parlour, her face was as pretty and as kissable as ever. She had not passed more than an hour in solitude when Fred Denton was announced. As a matter of fact it was not his first call that afternoon. But his previous entry—and its object—had been only known to Flora's French maid, and Flora herself. Denton came into the room, and seated himself with deliberation.

"Well?" he asked.

"I think it will be quite right, dear," answered Flora.

"He did not jilt you on the spot, then?" asked Denton, a little disappointedly.

"Oh!—I don't think that even Mr. Quartz is vulgar enough for that," said Flora, goodnaturedly.

"He's vulgar enough for anything," cried Denton, irritably, "still, if he gives you up, I don't care what else he does—so there!"

"Have a little patience, Fred," said Flora, earnestly; "wait for a day or so, and I believe you will get me for your wife—thanks to your cleverness."

"Cleverness!" exclaimed Denton, raising his eyebrows; "why I racked my brains to discover a way out of the difficulty. I don't call that cleverness. Necessity is the mother of invention, you know."

"Oh, but it was clever, dear!" persisted Flora; "it was such an original idea to begin with, and then you painted the scar so awfully well. The success of the whole thing really depended on that, you know."

"Only we haven't succeeded yet," said Denton, gloomily.

"Don't worry, Fred dear," said Flora, encouragingly; "we shall succeed—I'm quite sure."

And Flora's prophecy came true. As Denton had supposed, Mr. Quartz merely wished to make Flora his wife, because she had a pretty face and a graceful figure. He had no appreciation for the deeper qualities of her nature. So the very first post the next morning, brought Flora a note in a well known handwriting. It ran:

> "MY DEAR MISS WINSTONE—I need hardly say how shocked and grieved I was at the terrible result of your accident. I had no idea that you had sustained such an injury until I saw you yesterday, and I was rather surprised that you considered it unnecessary to acquaint me with the facts of the matter at an earlier date. Under the circumstances, you will, I think, realise that it is impossible for our connection to continue on its present footing. I mean—you will of course consider our engagement a thing of the past. If, however, you still desire to consider the contract binding, I must ask you to communicate with my lawyer, to whom I have already written.
>
> "Believe me, my dear Miss Winstone,
>
> "Yours faithfully,
>
> "SILAS QUARTZ."

Flora read the letter with an amused smile on her face until she came to the last sentence. Then she stamped her little foot angrily:

"The horrid beast!" she exclaimed, as she tore the missive into tiny pieces; "Fred was right after all. He's vulgar enough for anything. He thinks that I want to get his money—that I shall sue him for breach of promise. Oh I *am* glad that I have escaped from his clutches. Fred is a dear, but Mr. Quartz is—oh, I don't know what to call him!"

An hour or two later Fred called in, and was overjoyed at the good news which awaited him.

"Flo, dear," he cried; "I must have one little, two little, three little, four little, five little, six little—kisses. And oh—I shall want a great many more than that, too!"

Percy Collins.

Merely a Detail.

HE (after an elopement): "You led me to infer that you would inherit twenty thousand pounds." She: "No, I didn't. I said my father was worth that much." He: "Well, you never said a word about having fourteen brothers and sisters." She: "I didn't suppose you wanted to marry the whole family."

A Question of Laps.

A CORRESPONDENT asks: "Do you think it right for a girl to sit on a young man's lap even if she is engaged?" Now this is a ticklish question, and can be replied to in three different ways. "If it is our girl and our lap, yes; if it is another girl and our lap, yes; but if it is our girl and another fellow's lap, most certainly not."

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Love Bound in Leather.

A Pretty Tale of a Boot-maker's Assistant who Loved and Lost.

No wonder he looked a bit leathery; no wonder he tied his tie in a manner suggesting shoe-laces, and expressed his estimate of a fellow-man's character by the mysterious letters A, E or D.

He was "in the shoe business."

He always expressed it in that way as sounding somewhat better than the more vulgar acknowledgment, "I am an assistant in a shoe-shop."

But he was.

And his fingers had tied and untied more shoe-laces than even the manager of the establishment. But, although his eyes were a trifle weak, not to say pink and watery, his trouser-knees shiny, and though he possessed several other unpleasant drawbacks, his heart was a heart after all.

He never knew he had a heart until the day She came to get some slippers to wear at her own coming-out party on St. Valentine's Day. Mamma was with her—mamma, ponderous and imposing, but whose shoes he had fitted for years with all the patience imaginable. Said mamma that day as she swept into the big shop:

"Where is Mr. Jenkinson? I could never think of having shoes fitted by any other young person."

So when they called him—he was at the back of the shop explaining lucidly the intricacies of the day book to a lady from out of town, who was suspicious of fraud in the matter—he came at once.

"I remember—fives C, isn't it?" said he, bowing before her magnificence of furs and silks.

"Oh, but it isn't to-day, Mr. Jenkinson," said mamma, in a superior way. "It's twos, and the narrowest you have!"

And then, for the first time, he saw Her—or rather her foot; for, after all, it was her foot which stole his heart—healthy and tough in the matter of pretty feet, from having been in the business for years—and more.

I don't think he ever noticed her face—especially.

But that little foot!

Or rather those little feet, for he fitted them both. They were slender, arched-in instep, curved like the most exquisite of shoemaker's lasts. Not a foot for an artist to admire—not in the least—but a foot to wear and dance in a number two shoe in a manner to win the heart of the most *blasé* shoeman.

"White satin, please; and quite jolly high heels!" said a small, imperious voice.

And such dreams of slippers, such suggestions of coquetry in the matter of heels, did the amiable Mr. Jenkinson procure from out mysterious green boxes!

No wonder She was satisfied.

"For I'm *never* going to wear white ones again, you understand, until I'm either married or dead," said the small, imperious voice, essaying a laugh.

"Horrors!" said mamma. "What a reckless way of talking you have learnt at school! I feel quite like finding fault. I do indeed!"

But She only laughed again, and skipped merrily out to be tucked up with rugs by a pompous footman.

After that, when that footman waited before the door of the shop, it was more often "twos, quite narrow," than "fives, broad."

Ah, that St. Valentine's Day!

And poor Mr. Jenkinson!

How could a little girl just from school, revelling in her first season, know that among her fifty-odd adorers there was one who never so much as dared raise his pink, watery eyes from her feet?

"She's got the daintiest foot in town, bless her!" Mr. Jenkinson would say to himself.

And he came to brood upon it. Once when she tried on walking boots, she kicked off some tiny shoes which she had most audaciously dared to wear during her trip into town in the smart brougham, and said:

"You need not send them home; they are so worn."

That night Mr. Jenkinson instituted a shrine. It consisted of a corner cabinet of walnut, which was adorned as to its exterior with a knitted mat and a china dog.

When he had hired his room, the landlady had casually remarked:

"It'll open. You can keep your medicines in it. I hope you'll put it to no worse use. My last lodger—him as we had an inquest on—used it for his whisky bottle; and always carried the key."

Was it the latter fact or the matter of the inquest which seemed to so envelop the genial lady in disgust? Mr. Jenkinson never even tried to solve the problem. But it came to pass that he gave her reasons after that night to suspect his own possession of a whisky bottle, for he afterwards carried the key even as the man associated with the paragraph in a daily paper in reference to an inquest.

But a whisky bottle?

Oh no!

At night when he unlocked the door of the little walnut cabinet, one might see something far more dangerous to the masculine heart.

Two tiny half-worn shoes—of bronze kid.

They were his valentine's.

That was all.

Yet many men have worshipped less. And if on the last great day ALL is made open and all secrets disclosed, what strange, not to say laughable, shrines of the bachelor heart will be among the exhibits! And She never knew. That fact imparted a strange melancholy to the affair, in Mr. Jenkinson's opinion. And how busy She kept him! Pink shoes, blue slippers, green satin and lemon satin, and such wicked, wicked rosettes and heels!

At last—for there is always that inevitable "at last" in affairs of the heart, even though it be not a shoeman's heart, there came to Mr. Jenkinson a blow—a bitter, bad blow. You would not think a pair of white satin high-heeled "number twos, narrow," could administer as severe a one. But so it was. Had she not said, "I will never wear another pair of white ones until I marry or die?" And she was very much alive. He could not wish her dead—ah no!—but it was very hard to bear. He leant quite over that little dear foot as he fitted the slippers of a bride upon it. She could not see his face as she said:

"Please see that they put *real* seed pearls on the tulle rosettes, for these are to wear with a wedding-gown."

But, at the last moment, Fifine, the little maid, said in horror, as she fitted them upon the bride's silken covered foot:

"But, madame!—but, miss!—there are really strange marks upon the satin! One might almost call them tears!"

"It's too late to do anything about it now!" said mamma, fussily. "But really it was very careless of Mr. Jenkinson! As a matter of fact, they *do* look like tears—I wonder——"

"And if they *were* tears," cried the little bride, "are not tears pearls? and I ordered them."

Poor Mr. Jenkinson!

Johanna Staats.

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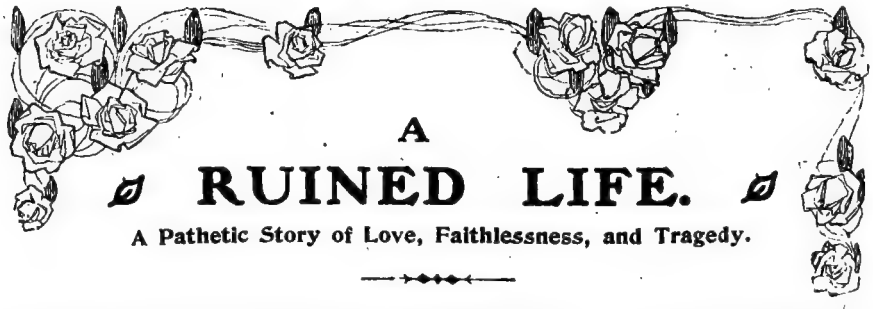

A RUINED LIFE.

A Pathetic Story of Love, Faithlessness, and Tragedy.

Mignonette grew in the little garden where Miselle sat at work; and she had plucked some of it and fastened it in her smooth, black hair. Somehow, having once been placed there, it seemed to have been planted and grown for no other purpose. Its very fragrance seemed a part of her. At least so Will Harrington thought as he stood looking at her.

"Mignonette," he said, stooping towards her; "Mignonette."

He would not have spoken so to one who would quite have understood him. But she, who had gathered all she knew at the humble school of Sheepdale, had never heard that mignonette means "little darling." It was no new thing for him to speak softly when he spoke to her either. She looked up not surprised or startled, and said:

"Yes, Mr. Harrington, I love mignonette."

Just then Will was inclined to forget everything but that she was pretty. He was himself a fashionable man, a scion of uppertendom. Until the summer he had never fancied that his heart could be won by any girl who had not style and family and a thorough acquaintance with all the requirements of good society. But here, in this long summer of rest and quiet he had fallen in love with a country girl, humble even amidst simple people in her position, for she was poor, and the grandchild of two old people, who could leave her nothing. This was the end of his resolve to escape for once from the routine of London and the Riviera.

To think of it seriously gave him much the same feeling that a bather experiences on his first plunge into cold water. Just at that moment, however, he did not endeavour to think. No one was in the garden save themselves and a great golden bee, hovering and humming above the flowers.

Miselle's face was so beautiful, and her hair so black, and her eyes like velvet also, set with diamonds, and the fragrance of the mignonette and the chirrup of insect, and song of bird, and faintly-tinkling of cow-bell, all sanctified the scene.

So Will Harrington drew Miselle towards him, and looked down into her eyes and said:

"Miselle, be my Mignonette?"

What he meant dawned upon her, and she blushed and trembled. Then he spoke more plainly.

"I love you, Miselle. Will you be my wife?" and she answered: "Yes."

Afterwards they sat just so for a long while. His arm about her waist, her work dropped in her lap under her small brown hands. So still that the golden bee lighted upon the mignonette in Miselle's hair for a moment, and sipped, and flew away, homeward this time, for the sun was setting.

And then a voice broke the charm, a harsh old voice, with a nasal twang.

"Miselle," it said, "yew come in tew tea, and Mr. Harrin'tun p'raps you'd better set down tew!"

But the gentleman addressed declined, and took his way homeward. Walking through the country ways, he thought. The thoughts were not pleasant.

"But I shall take Miselle away," he muttered. "These people will be nothing to us. We will travel a year or two. And she will acquire the necessary manners." And already he wished that there was not something to be thought of.

Happily, he did not think when with Miselle, and the weeks went by pleasantly; and when they parted, he put a ring upon her finger, and promised to come for her in the autumn.

They were to correspond, of course—and that was a pleasant thing to Miselle. And he left her with moist eyes, and carried a little bunch of mignonette.

The summer holidays were ended, and the fashionable world had come to the city again to keep its winter holiday, and Harrington found everything as of yore, and as many gay beauties ready to unite upon him. There was an old flirtation, too, which could not well be ended while the lady was so willing it should turn into something more, between Miss Dash, the heiress, and himself. And at first, Will did not mention Miselle to his friends, because there was time enough. And at last, because it was an awkward business, being put off so long. And Miselle wrote too many letters, and put them into coarse, yellow envelopes, and was not careful of her grammar. And she spoke far too much of those old grand-parents, who were Will's abomination. And amidst balls and suppers, and dinner parties, Miss Dash re-asserted her supremacy; until reproaches for neglected answers came from Miselle and vexed her lover. Still he smoothed this over, and would, perhaps, have gone down to Sheepdale to keep his troth in the autumn, had not Miselle written him, in the fulness of her reconciliation, a loving letter, in which she spoke of the trials of her grand-parents, and of her joy in looking forward to the time when she could have a home to which to welcome them. Those old people, hard and coarse, and ignorant, whom he abhorred so!

Will never answered that letter. He burnt it, with a savage oath, and that night proposed to Miss Dash.

In a month they were married, and there was a fashionable wedding and a reception in the West-End; and diamonds and lace, and presents of gold and silver, and a tour, to end all with, and the two were one.

Before his honeymoon was over, Will discovered that he had never loved his wife, and that he adored Miselle.

A woman might carry such a secret to her grave with her. A man could not hide it. The bride who had been a belle and was not to bear such an insult calmly, discovered it in the briefest space of time. She intended to be a true wife, but she now took revenge in kind—to make her husband jealous was the task of her life. She flirted as she had never done in her girlish days. And as there is no danger of going too far with one who cannot be angling for a husband, a married woman can flirt when she pleases.

Will cared nothing for his wife, but he was proud and grew angry. He watched her with wild, jealous eyes, and the unhappy match ended in a quarrel, and in a separation.

And the world made more of the affair than it really was, and Will knew that he was the subject of much cruel talk, and shrank away from its gaze more ashamed of that which this darling, heiress-wife of his had brought upon him, than he ever could have been of Miselle's poor grammar, or of her old grand-parents.

He lived alone, and his wife led a gay life, apart from him, and was not too well spoken of, and in his solititude the man thought continually of Miselle, whom he had deserted. Thought how pure she would have been—how true to him, and how he would have loved her, until his life knew one great longing—a longing to be quite free to love Miselle again.

One day the wish was gratified. News came to him that his wife was dead.

It had been his fault that she had been wretched, and had made him so, but he never thought of that. He only felt that he was free. Miselle had not married, and now he would win her again. The world was nothing to him. He had fled from its tongue and its eyes long before, Miselle should do as she chose. There should be nothing which he would not give

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her leave to do. The old people might sit at her hearth and at her board, so that only that hearth and that board should be his also. And in holiday attire he went down to Sheepdale.

It was early summer. The day was like the one when he had told his love to Miselle. A bee or two, one might have been the very same, fluttered about the quiet garden again. Morning glories, purple and white, draped the porch. The seat where she sat at work was there beneath the grape vine, and there, too, were the perfumed borders of mignonette. The house was still, and all the windows were closed. It was often so of a summer afternoon. The man to whom this brought back those happy days so nearly, sat down to wait, and think what he should say to Miselle. Perhaps she did not know he had been married. If so, why tell her? Let the world he had thought so much of keep his unhappy secret. He would stay here in solitude with Miselle.

She would be proud at first—either cold or angry—but he would woo so humbly that she should forgive him in the end. As one condemned to death might pray for pity and mercy, he would beseech Miselle for pity and pardon. And then, yes, then she would let him draw her to his heart, and touch her brow with his lips, and call her his Mignonette, his little darling, once again.

And he had come to this thought, when the door opened, and he arose to greet Miselle.

But it was not Miselle, only her old grandmother, common of feature as ever, but with a strange, grief-stricken face. She did not see him, but went straight to the beds of mignonette, and began to pluck handfuls with her horny hands. Then he spoke to her. She looked up.

"I'm pickin' 'em for Miselle," she said, then gave a start. "I didn't know ye at first, Mr. Harrin'tun. I thought 'twas the minister. You're aged, and you're kind of grey. Yes, these are for Miselle. I used to be hard on her for likin' 'em, so I'm afraid. But I wanted her to be steady. Ef I'd knowed——"

Then came a sob. Harrington caught the old woman's arm.

"What is it? What has happened?"

"I reckoned you knew Miselle is dead. You see she kind o' faded when your letters stopped comin'. She wouldn't tell me. I supposed you quarrelled. She got tired of things, and sat a great deal by herself. Plenty wanted her—she was pretty. But she didn't seem to care. Six months ago she was took down. There was no hope then, and yesterday she died. Says she, 'Grannie, it's most over; when I'm gone, put his letters in the grave with me, and put mignonette in my hair. And tell him,' says she, 'for I think he'll come—that I always loved him.' P'raps you'd like to see her?"

Harrington followed her, and saw Miselle, dead, with his letters upon her bosom. Him the world never saw again. Until the old people died, he saw they wanted nothing, and while he lived, dwelt near Miselle's grave. Near it, also, his own has grown green for many years; and over both, creep soft beds of mignonette in the summer time, luring the golden bees from the gardens with its fragrance. K. D.

THE LAST WILL OF ABEL MITCHELL.

He Changed his Mind as to the Disposition of his Property.

ABEL MITCHELL called to his typine.

"You may go, Miss Morris," he said. He did not look up from the papers before him.

The young woman turned to the clock with a little start of surprise. It was only 4.30. But she quietly put on her hat and with a murmured good night, left the room.

Abel listened to the departing rustle of her skirts with a thoughtful expression. There was a sensible girl, a girl who never grated on his feelings, a girl who asked no useless questions. She had reached an age of discretion. If Jim was determined to marry a poor girl, why couldn't he have taken one like Emma Morris?

Abel opened a heavy envelope and drew forth a folded paper.

"Jim never was confidential with me," he grumbled. "Perhaps I didn't invite his confidence. I don't know. Now he has disobeyed my direct command. That can't be overlooked. When he told me about this girl, I said, wait. 'How long?' he asked. 'Until you reach years of discretion,' I cried, and turned away. Jim is twenty-four. Twenty-four. And I married at twenty-one. Yes, and ran away too. But it was different with me. My father had nothing to give me. I was quite independent. He was glad to have me shift for myself. Jim's father is a rich man. Jim's father has given him pounds where my father begrudged me pennies. Jim owes me filial obedience. He has disobeyed me to his bitter cost."

He unfolded the paper that he had taken from the envelope and ran his keen, grey eye down the closely written lines.

"He has given up his father for a pretty face," he murmured.

"Let him stand by the consequences. Who is she? What is she? It matters not. No doubt they trapped him into this marriage. 'A rich man's son,' they chuckled. But they'll find they're fooled. 'Father,' he said, 'I am to be married to-morrow night. Will you come with me to the wedding?' I turned on my heel. Then I looked back. 'You know the price you may pay?' I cried. 'Yes, father,' he said, with his head high up. 'I know. Good-bye, and God bless you.' He asked a blessing on me! Ha, ha, ha! That's too rich! But he'll get evil for good this time. I'll cut him off with a shilling. Let him sup on herbs for a while. That'll take the veneer from love's young dream. I'll draw up a new will at home to-night and have it witnessed before I sleep. And to let him know what his foolish fancy has cost him, I'll write him a letter—a letter he can show to his new relatives. That's the thing—the letter."

He bent down with his head upon his hand and his eyes upon the paper. A rustle of skirts in the doorway drew his attention. He did not look up. It was a way he had.

"Ah, Miss Morris," he said, "back again?" He had quite forgotten that he had sent her home.

The young girl in the doorway did not answer. Her bright eyes were fixed upon the old man. She expected him to look up. If he had done so he would have seen a charming vision. She was a very pretty girl—dainty and neat from the crown of her new hat to the tips of her new shoes. But he did not look up.

"Just in time," he added. "I want to dictate a letter before you go."

He paused, and the young girl, as if seized with a sudden

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fancy, quietly stepped into the room and seated herself at the typewriter.

"You have been with us so long, Miss Morris," the old man continued, "that we view you as a confidential agent. Besides, this will be public property very soon. I am going to write to my son. Last night he married an unknown girl against my wishes. I am going to tell him that I wash my hands of him and his; that to-night I change my will, cutting him off with a single shilling. Are you ready?"

The girl at the typewriter gave the instrument a preliminary click or two.

"James Mitchell," began the old man, "as you have seen fit to disobey me, to cast my fatherly wishes in my teeth, I desire you to know that I have no wish to hold further communication with you. While I cherish the impression that you were lured into this unhappy marriage—"

The typewriter stopped.

"Unhappy marriage," the old man repeated, and the clicking recommenced, "yet I cannot accept this as any excuse for your undutiful conduct. To-night I change my will, and you may rest assured that your name will be passed over with the smallest possible financial consideration. I prefer to have you understand this here and now. It will prevent you and your new friends from cherishing any false hopes. This is all I have to say, and no reply will be expected. Abel Mitchell."

The young girl drew the sheet from the machine and, bringing it forward, laid it on the old man's desk. Abel glanced it through.

"A beautiful copy," he said, and carefully folded it. Then he placed it in an envelope and dipped a pen in ink.

"I do not know his address," he said, and knit his brows.

The girl at the end of the desk extended her hand.

"If you have no objection," she quietly said, "I will deliver it to him in person."

The old man looked up at the fair face bending over him.

"Why, who are you?" he cried.

"I am Alice Mitchell," said the young girl.

"Mitchell!" repeated Abel dully. "M—my son's wife. And what—" But the ugly words would not come. He could not utter them in the light of those gentle eyes. "Will you be seated?" he lamely added.

"Thank you, no," said the girl. "I have but a few words to say; they will not detain you long." Abel's gaze dropped to the letter and the will, and a sarcastic smile twisted his mouth. "No, no," the girl quickly added. "I have not come to plead with you. You are quite wrong to imagine such a thing. And you were quite wrong, too, to insult me as you did in that letter."

He looked up again quickly. There were tears in the gentle eyes. And there was a glint of fire in them, too. "You insulted me, and you insulted my dear father. I have no mother." She paused a moment. "When you insinuated that my father was mercenary in this matter you did him a cruel wrong. He was bitterly opposed to our marrying without your consent. I disobeyed my father too. But it was not for your money. This letter will bring us no surprise."

The old man dropped his eyes beneath her reproachful gaze.

"Perhaps I was hasty," he slowly said, "but the provocation was great." Then he quickly added—"But knowing as you did, that I opposed the wedding, and your father opposed it too, why did you permit yourself to marry my boy?"

"I could make it clear to you, I think," said the girl gently, "if you loved your boy."

The old man trembled. If he loved his boy! All that was near and dear to him—all that was left to him of kith and kin. The babe that a dying wife had solemnly placed in his paternal arms. If he loved his boy! He drew a long breath and stared hard at the blank envelope on the desk before him.

"And now," said the young girl, "I only want to add that I think Jim was quite wrong in crossing your wishes. He might have waited. I wanted him to wait. But he is so proud, so self-willed. I am very sorry that I should be the means of separating you, and I—I am quite sure I am not worth the great sacrifice my dear—my husband—has made."

Abel was quite sure there were tears in her eyes again, but he did not look up.

"Where is Jim now?" he asked. Then he smiled grimly. "And why are you not enjoying your—your wedding tour?"

"There was a vacancy in the bank where my father is employed," said the girl, "and father secured it for Jim. His duties began to-day. Perhaps we will take our wedding journey later. We have to look out carefully for the main chance now, you know."

"And you didn't expect to fall back on my sovereigns?" said the old man.

"Not a penny of them," quickly replied the girl.

The old man fidgeted in his chair.

"And why not?" he asked.

"I think you understand," said the girl, and her gaze dropped to the letter on the desk.

"Does Jim know you are here?"

"No. At least he didn't know I was coming. Father will tell him to meet me at the corner at five o'clock. I must go."

"Wait," said the old man quickly. He looked at her searchingly. She met his gaze with a smile. Her mind was on Jim.

Abel deliberately put the will back in its envelope and the envelope in its pigeonhole. Then he picked up the letter in its unaddressed envelope, tore it into minute particles and tossed them into the waste-paper basket.

"I've changed my mind," he softly muttered.

He pulled down his desk-cover with a bang and reached for his hat.

"There," he said, "I'm ready." Then he added, "Will you give me your arm, my dear?" As they passed through the doorway he paused.

"I think, Alice," he said, "that you and I are going to be very good friends. And now we must hunt up Jim and take him home with us."

W. R. Rose.

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A Siren of the Sea.

The Love of a Lighthouse Keeper's Daughter.

"You see, one grows tired of life in the same grooves. A changeless day gets to be monontonous," explained Ned Holcomb, while idly throwing small pieces of rock into the channel, where it lay around Rock Point, and watching the play of sunshine and shadow over the water, as light clouds floated across the sky, driven slowly along by a south breeze, this calm April afternoon.

"Your queer, charming habitation, right out in the middle of the ocean, is so inaccessible and remote, it seems like a different world, from ordinary humdrum city life. What an ideal retreat, and how you must enjoy getting beyond people's reach, and away from sin and wickedness, and all uncharitableness," continued Holcomb, leaning back against the abutment of the lighthouse, and tilting his hat over his eyes to shade them from the slanting rays of the sun, gilding the vast expanse of the ocean, shining white on the rails of the fishing fleet, skimming homeward, and outlining the rigging and smokestacks of an ocean liner steaming in across the bar.

Yvette smiled a little wistfully, for the solitude of their storm-beaten eyrie, so alluring to Ned, as a relief from the whiz of electric cars, the jangling noises of the city and perpetual contact with humanity, was sometimes oppressive to one so endowed with life and spirits as were the eternal wash and moan of the sea on the jagged rocks of the reef.

Then Yvette laughed, and, turning, looked with a frank gaiety at Ned Holcomb.

"How long do you think you could live here, away from your friends and business; with just the sea to sing to you, and only the stars at night to tell you tales? What would you do with yourself all day, and in the evening?"

"I never said I'd like to live here without—any—companionship," Ned said, returning the frank look of Yvette's deep, grey eyes, with one of open admiration, mingled with a friendliness Yvette had grown quite accustomed to by this time.

For, since the visit of the *Sea Gull*, three months ago, to Rock Point Lighthouse, Ned Holcomb had developed a great love for the sea apparently, and had fallen into the habit of sailing far out into the harbour to do deep sea fishing on the outer rocks. Going or returning, he would stop at the lighthouse, to bring, as he had promised, papers and periodicals to Ben Ker, and books, sweets, and flowers, to Yvette, whose glad pleasure, so unrestrainedly expressed, produced a curious impression on their giver.

Running slowly back to the city at nightfall or later, when the rising moon was casting mysterious witcheries over the rippling tide, Ned Holcomb would see Yvette's face, and the gleam of the Lighthouse beacon, not the electric lights of the distant city, and its church spires stretching up against the sky.

"There's a fascination about the sea," Yvette said, slowly, turning her gaze towards the far distant horizon, and ignoring her companion's last remark. "Even when in winter the wild storms dash the billows up against the Lighthouse, and the winds shriek and whistle, it gives one an exultant feeling to know that the old tower stands firm for all their fluster and rage, they can't prevail and tear it to pieces. Then in the summer, you can't think how lovely the sea is out here. How pleasantly it whispers, and how sweetly the little waves drone one to sleep! I've sometimes thought it dreary, but how I will miss the dear old Lighthouse! the never-ceasing sound of the waves, and the call of the sea-gulls, and the salt spray in the air. How I love it all!"

They were sitting on the rocks, watching the sunset on the ocean, and the tide being low, short waves were breaking at the foot of the reef, making a monotonous sound.

"What do you mean?" queried Ned Holcomb, a curious pang running through him. "You are not thinking of going away?"

Yvette nodded slowly.

Ned Holcomb turned quickly, then paused in what he was going to say, for what business was it of his why Yvette and the old man, her father, should give up their care of the Lighthouse and go—perhaps back to the little village on the Brittany coast, from which he had drifted long years ago?

Why should he care if this beautiful girl went away from this lonely dwelling-place, which she had made so bright and attractive; those rooms within the stone tower she had adorned and beautified until they seemed to Ned Holcomb to be an ideal spot on the earth's surface? Why, in Heaven's name, should he care?

The Lighthouse would be turned over to some rough seaman, and the beacon would shine just as well as when Ben Ker tended it with Yvette's help.

"He is much stronger and better since the warm, spring days have come, but the doctor says he must not stay at the Lighthouse another winter. Then—in June—I will go to live in the village on the island, but my darling old dad must come too. I would die if I were separated from him."

Again there was a pause, which Ned Holcomb filled up mentally by picturing what those jutting rocks would be without Yvette's presence; how desolate when her voice would no longer mingle with the beating of the surf, and she would not be there to give him a gay greeting as his boat ran up to the stone steps; when she would no longer stand looking down on him with a light of greeting in her great honest eyes, which he had grown to expect, while a sudden glow intensified her remarkable beauty.

"Why must you go to live on the island—in June?" Ned queried, without excusing the inquisitiveness of the inquiry.

"I am to—be—married in June," Yvette answered in a quiet, troubled voice.

"To whom?" Holcomb asked roughly.

"A good man—Peter Stevenson," Yvette answered, turning to look out over the water, where the last golden sun-rays were lingering before twilight would soften the crimsons and vivid purples of the sky to pale tints and fading greys.

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"And—you care for him, of course? We have grown to be such good friends, have we not? I know you will not mind telling me," Ned Holcomb said, in a friendly voice, which had a queer ring in it. "You won't mind, you are so honest and straightforward."

"I've known him all my life," Yvette said slowly. "As a little girl and when I was in the convent. In the holidays we used to play together. He was always kind and nice, and dad loves him dearly. Dad was so grieved when he was ill, thinking about me, that I promised him I would marry Peter in June. Just two weeks off now!"

"You did not answer me, Yvette," Ned half whispered, taking Yvette's hands and holding them tight. "Tell me."

A whole lifetime may be lived sometimes in a few moments. The future may stretch out before us in luminous colours, and just as a flash of lightning during the density of a storm will reveal all the hidden features of a landscape with a precision never to be obliterated from memory, so a few words under the intensity of feeling will unriddle the strange mystery of tangled hopes and desires to which we have been drifting, perhaps unconsciously.

Yvette raised her eyes steadily and met Holcomb's look and read it, as no woman ever fails to do.

"I do not now, but I will in time. He is good and loves me dearly. Stop! I know what you would say. Do you think I would let you—marry a Lighthouse keeper's daughter? You, with so much to live for? Oh, no, no! But it was pleasant. You have made these past months so bright. When I go I will remember how you used to come to our Lighthouse to cheer us, and how pleasant the evenings were. Good-bye!"

Standing before her, Ned Holcomb lost his head, and poured out the pent-up words, which, by Yvette's beauty and constant companionship during the past months, had been stored up, waiting for just such an occasion for utterance.

What did he care for the world's opinion? Ned asked. Was not happiness the sole and rightful aim of life? Has not each one the right to seek it, and grasp it, wherever and whenever the chance occurs? Is it not far more honest to break faith with one, when one's whole soul and thoughts are wrapped up in another's? Yvette spoke like a child! Like the dear, honest, unsophisticated little girl she was. It was absurd, hideous, to think for an instant of throwing herself away on a common shipwright. She must marry him, and they would go away, anywhere, and Ben Ker would join them. Who in all this world was so beautiful and noble and fearless as Yvette? His Yvette.

"You think so now—but it's all a mistake, dear," she answered slowly, a great tenderness welling up in her heart. "Your life and mine lie far, far apart. You must go your way, and I must go mine, and we will both forget—all but the pleasant hours we spent in the old Lighthouse, and on these rocks, listening to the voices of the sea. Good-bye!"

"Do you mean it? It must be for all time, remember, Yvette."

"For all time!" she answered steadily.

Ned Holcomb looked long at the face before him, and, stooping, kissed the rich bronze hair the sea breezes loved to toy with.

And when, the wind catching the sail, his boat ran swiftly down the channel, Yvette, standing on the jutting rock, outlined on the sombre background of the old Lighthouse, the rising tide tossing their restless billows up against the rocks around her, remained forever in his memory a picture of utter loveliness, and one of most pathetic beauty.

"Where is your friend? Why did he not stay to supper? Has he gone?" queried Ben Ker, stroking Yvette's ruffled hair as she nestled against him and leaned against his shoulder.

"He's gone, dad. Gone away. He'll not come back."

"Gone away for good? Well, well! You'll miss his visits, my pet, and his books. But we'll soon leave the old Lighthouse. We'll soon leave it. I'll miss the roar of the water and the whistle of the wind at night and the lighting of the beacon.

"But life ashore will be better for my birdie. She will not miss a stranger's visits then. Peter will be here to-morrow, and we'll settle on the date in June, and soon we'll move out and let Harrison take my place. You'll have Peter to take care of you, and your old dad, Ben Ker, has provided well for his little girl. You will be happy as the day is long."

"Yes, dad, as happy as the day is long," whispered Yvette, clinging to the old man.

* * * * *

"Can anybody tell me what in the world is the matter with Ned Holcomb? Perhaps there's insanity in the family. Does anyone know anything about it?" queried Mrs. Carson of those around, while sipping tea.

"Can't imagine, unless he's in love. It must be with that wonderful siren of the sea we came across last spring. You remember? She's a perfect Lorelei—a beauty! Ned Holcomb, to my mind, has never been the same since, and his rushing off to spend the summer rambling about, all by himself, in the Alps, when Kitty had her trousseau ready, was the stupidest thing I ever heard of. If I had been Kitty I would have let him go—for good. But Kit's so dead in love with him!"

"Don't wonder. We all are. Ned Holcomb's a dear."

"Sh-s-s-s-sh! Here's Kitty!" warned someone.

There was an air of triumph about Kitty as she came in.

"Where is Ned Holcomb? Why, in town. No, I won't go to the Whirtley's next month. I'll probably be out of town."

"A bridal tour?"

Kitty nodded assent, and was pounced on by all the women present.

"Hello, old fellow. Let me congratulate you. Miss Kitty's a charming girl, and deuced clever," an acquaintance said to Holcomb at the club that night.

Ned Holcomb shook hands, and lapsed back into his moody gazing through the window.

He saw some jutting rocks, and a weather-beaten Lighthouse; breakers curling up and breaking against them, and the tall, lithe form of Yvette half hidden in the spray. He saw a beautiful face, young and strong and tender, fading out of sight.

Holcomb turned and went out, to call on Kitty Leversham, his *fiancée*.

S. Rhett Roman.

Cupid Up-to-date.

"You have made this Cupid with a revolver," said the editor to his artist. "Isn't it customary to arm the god of lovers with a bow and arrows?" "Yes, sir," replied the artist, "but art must keep up with the times."

Wise Heads on Young Shoulders.

"I KNOW why the doctor brought that little baby," said a five-year-old the other day to her happy mother. "And why did the doctor bring the baby?" was asked. "'Cause it cries so much he didn't want to keep it himself," was the reply.

His Favourite Bird.

"Oh, Mr. Hunker!" exclaimed Miss Dorothy, who is an enthusiastic ornithologist, "which of the song birds are you fondest of?" "I prefer the hen, Miss Dorothy." "But the hen isn't a song bird." "Well, it is the only bird whose lay I care for."

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Those Buttons!

She jumped into a third-class railway carriage, just as the train was beginning to move out of the station.

A soldier was leaning out of the window on the opposite side. He did not turn his head at her somewhat flurried entrance, but continued to gaze out of the window.

The girl and the soldier were the only occupants of the compartment.

At sight of the soldier, a curious light came into the girl's eyes, for she collected military buttons. Two remarkably fine specimens gleamed on the soldier's coat, just below his pipe-clayed belt.

She fixed her eyes upon the buttons, and broke the tenth commandment. Remember, she was a button enthusiast.

Her collection, so far, was but a scanty one. She did not move in military circles. What a difference those two buttons would have made!

She wanted the buttons badly, and they were no earthly good to the soldier. What useful purpose could they possibly serve, stuck there in that foolish fashion, just where the soldier's waist ought to have been? They would certainly look much better in her little button museum, on a background of red velvet. Velvet was so much more becoming than flannel. Really, those buttons couldn't be expected to do themselves justice on red flannel!

She edged a little nearer to the soldier. She couldn't have told what regiment the buttons belonged to, but that was no matter. She wanted them. That was enough.

How easy it would be, with the help of her pocket scissors—but no, such a thing was impossible!

The hungry look deepened in her eyes. Such a look Tantalus might have worn as he gazed in agony at the golden fruit he might not reach.

It was impossible, she told herself, and yet, how easy!

Furtively she fumbled in her pocket. Then she glanced again at the burly, motionless back. Softly she crept nearer and nearer to that unconscious expanse of red flannel.

One—two little snips, and the buttons would be hers! Why not? Surely it was an innocent proceeding? Supposing she were to ask the soldier for those buttons, he would, she reflected, be only too happy to present them to her. But speak to a strange man in a railway carriage she could not. Much better do the thing quietly, without any fuss.

Would the soldier get into trouble for returning to his barracks minus two buttons? She hoped not.

Of course, if he knew nothing about their disappearance, he could not be held responsible. On the whole, therefore, it would be better that he should not know. In fairness to the poor soldier, she would snip them off behind his back.

She was almost beginning to feel as if she would be doing the soldier a service by cutting off those superfluous buttons. This, of course, is the right and proper frame of mind in which to commit any kind of sin.

With trembling fingers she brought her scissors to bear upon the button that was nearest to her.

There was an almost inaudible click, and the button was hers!

Emboldened by her success, she seized the other button between her finger and thumb.

Now, whether it was that success had made her reckless or excitement unnerved her, or whether it was an unexpected jerk in the motion of the train, the writer is not in a position to say.

Suffice it that, at the critical moment, her hand slipped, as it were, and she gave the button an involuntary pull.

The soldier looked round.

"Bess!"

"Jim!"

The button she had annexed dropped from her nerveless fingers.

He picked it up and gazed at it in silent amazement.

Then his eyes fell upon the scissors in her hand.

"My button!" he remarked, stupidly

"I collect them, you know" she said.

"Oh!"

She looked at him nervously.

His face was twitching convulsively.

"I—I suppose I ought to apologise," she stammered.

"Please don't. Would you like the other one as well?"

"No, thank you."

"But you—you were trying to snip it off when I turned round, weren't you?"

"Ye-es."

He looked at her scarlet face in evident enjoyment of her confusion.

"You have changed very much," he said, and his eyes were overrunning with laughter now. They were wonderfully pleasant eyes.

"How do you mean?" she asked.

"Two years ago," he said, "you had the keenest sense of humour of any girl I know."

At the words the whole absurdity of the situation flashed upon her.

Her merriment threatened to become almost hysterical. Suddenly she stopped laughing and looked at his soldier's uniform.

"What are you wearing those for?" she said.

"I've enlisted."

"Good heavens!"

"Six months ago."

"Can nothing be done?"

"I don't understand."

"Can't you resign, or abscond, or whatever it's called?"

"And you are the woman who collects military buttons!" he remarked sadly.

"Don't you want to get out?"

"Not till the next station but one," he replied.

"Out of the Army, I mean, of course."

"Get out of the Army? Why, I've only just got in!"

"What made you do it?"

"Love of the thing, Bess. Couldn't do it any other way, so made up my mind to start in the ranks."

"But two years ago you——"

"I had very different plans? Two years ago, if you remember, I was going to be married."

She looked at him in growing wonder. "Do you mean that for her sake you sacrificed your dearest wish?"

"I couldn't expect her to marry a common soldier, could I?"

"And she never guessed. She allowed a paltry quarrel to separate her from the man who was willing to give up so much."

"I used to think she would come back."

"And you waited?"

"Yes. Six months ago I heard she was engaged to another man."

"It was not true, Jim."

"Not true?"

"No. Jim, you said just now you couldn't expect the girl to marry a common soldier. Won't you give her the chance?"

"Bess!"

"Oh, Jim, I adore military buttons!"

Grete Hahn.

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After Many Days.

Two Little Children Lead the Way.

THE moon, the beautiful, full June moon, was shining gloriously down on this poor work-a-day world of ours, making its most commonplace details beautiful and unreal.

Under the tall elm trees it cast black, dense shadows, out on the grass it made great pale stretches, cool and fairy-like.

Under the largest elm, and therefore, in the densest shadow, stood two people.

What matters it to lovers how dark it is?

Her hands were on his shoulders and her face was raised a little.

His face was white even in the moonlight, white with misery not altogether for himself, but for her whom he loved so passionately and could bring nothing but harm.

"You have everything to gain, my beautiful—I have nothing to lose," he said, stroking the soft fair hair.

"Don't speak so hopelessly, Dick," she said in a fond, but petulant tone.

The man sighed and moved a little out of the gloom. You could see then he was in the prime of his life, about thirty years of age, and she was fully ten years his junior.

"You don't understand—thank God, the full weight of misery is not on your shoulders yet. You don't know—as I do—what love means. You have not waited ten weary years for it to come, tied in a loveless, hideous union like I am, and when it has come, personified in you, my beautiful girl, I cannot take it. You don't know what it means to me not to have you, to hold you, to make your life a flower garden for evermore, to make you my queen and idol, in reality, as you are now, in thought, you don't know what it means."

"Don't talk like that, dear, it only makes it harder to bear, I——" she put in gently.

"Nothing *can* make it harder, more cruel, more unendurable than it is now!" he cried fiercely.

"It may not *always* be like this. I love you, Dick, and you love me. One day"—with a sigh she could not repress—"it may come right."

The man folded her slight figure in his arms.

"One day, my pet—it may. But life is short at best, and we are to waste our youth in longing for that which we perhaps will never get. Why did you cross my life? I could bear is easier till you came, and why, oh, why did I cross yours, to make your beautiful, happy life miserable, and shadow your bright future?"

They stood thus silent and sad together.

At last he spoke again, "You must go, Ruth, it is getting late. Good-night, my beautiful girl, my heart's bride, go and try and forget poor old Dick, who can never forget you."

"Oh, I can't go and leave you, don't send me away like that," she sobbed piteously, clinging to him.

But he was firm.

"Dearest, your good name is more to me than my own life. To be seen with me, a married man, would bring scandal to you, and if *she* were to see you, God help you then! Go, my darling, go and forget me if you can, if not, remember me, who loves you for now and always."

The lovers parted sorrowfully, and he watched her graceful little figure flit away between the shadows and over the moon spaces—the girl he loved so utterly!

When she had gone he sighed and retraced his steps, back to his loveless life, back to the sordid cares and hacking worries of everyday existence, back to everything uncongenial to his loving and affectionate nature, with nothing but the memory of one summer holiday, one pair of trusting grey eyes and one woman who henceforth was all the world to him. She walked with him to business, and sat with him in the office, she cheered him in solitude and comforted him in sorrow.

Her real self he never saw. She wrote sometimes, loving and tender letters, but the days lengthened into months and the months to years and one day a letter came. She was sorry, she loved him still, but it was so hopeless and she was so lonely. Another man had asked her to marry him and would Dick give her up? She was fond of him—after a fashion, and he would make her a good husband.

Dick sat long, looking stonily at the photograph of a lean, mean-faced man which she had inclosed. So this was to be the end, and this man, this miserable low-bred stranger (Dick could think of nothing bad enough to call him) was to take his love, take her honourably, whilst he who loved her so dearly could only stand by and look on.

"Oh, Fate, I have borne a lot," he murmured, clenching his hands at the thought, "don't put this on me, it is more than I can bear. Leave her free, don't tie her perhaps to the misery of my life. My shoulders are broad, I can bear a lot, but oh, God, not that, not that——"

And the sun went down leaving the office in a dusty dimness, and the man staring before him, his firm mouth set in even a firmer line under his fair moustache; his face whiter than ever.

Suddenly, with a sigh, he turned on the lights and wrote to her.

Wrote her from his heart, the heart she would be mistress of for ever, and told her to marry and be happy and forget him, and as he dropped the letter into the post it fell like a thud on his heart, leaving him lifeless and cold as though he were partially dead.

Galling insinuations and ceaseless bickering passed over Dick's head that night and roused neither comment nor reply. What were *her* everlasting wrangles compared to the struggle he had just gone through.

His little three-year-old son came to his knee clad in his little nightdress.

Looking up in his face he put out one little hand and murmured "Daddy," with the instinctive feeling possessed by children in the presence of trouble that they cannot understand.

He gathered the little boy in his arms in silent and passionate love. Here at least was something all his own, something whose affection was loyal and trusting, something that would help to heal the wound and fill the vacuum in his sore heart.

Later on he read the wedding in the paper. It aroused very little interest in him. Ruth was buried for ever in the depths of his being, neither to be disturbed nor banished while his life lasted.

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Like the memory of a beautiful, though priceless picture, or the scent of a vanished and unobtainable flower, she lived on with him.

And the days lengthened into months and the months into years again, and many threads of grey came to mingle with Dick's fair hair, and a look of calm and a deep hat band were all the changes in him.

For he was free now. Free, and for what? What was the use of freedom to him?

Little Paul, with the sturdy persistence of nine years, was risking his precious life climbing out on the breakwater. Dick sat with his back against it, smoking while he read the paper, whilst his small son daily did his best to annihilate himself.

He had lately gone the way of most men and taken unto his small self a sweetheart, and the father would stand and watch the youthful pair dig castles with canals to the water's edge, or hold picnics on sand tables decorated with seaweed and more or less unsavoury castings up of the tide.

A dead, very dead, starfish as a rule graced the head of the table, flanked on either side by mouldings of Paul's tin bucket trimmed with cockle shells.

Paul's "little girl," as he termed her, occupied a great deal of his time. He led her into every conceivable source of mischief and danger, over which she usually came to grief, although she rarely made an outcry, and stood by her youthful admirer with unswerving faith and affection.

One day—it was like other days to most people, but to Dick it was a memorable day—one day when the sun was shining fiercely down on the shore and the children's voices sounded dim and distant, Dick was roused by feeling an imperious little push against him. Imagining Paul was desirous of pennies or information, and being comfortable, he said "go away" and did not open his eyes. The little push was repeated.

Thus effectually roused, Dick looked up to see Paul's little sweetheart standing close to him, a rather pitiful expression on her little face. Her legs were bare, and there was a large red gash under the knee of one, from which a white handkerchief had slipped and was dangling round her ankle.

"Please, tie me up," she said. "It's comed down."

What was there in this child's little sunburnt face that attracted him?

He sat up and prepared to untie the white bandage. He sighed as he did so, the little maid had disturbed a beautiful day dream that had come to the world-weary man often through the long years. A dream, never to be realised and a dream only, but beautiful for all that.

"How did you do this?" he asked, as he spread the handkerchief on his knee.

"Fell off the iron bit of the pier."

"What out there—however did you get out there?"

"Me and Paul played sailors, and climbed out, and I fell off."

"Oh, did you! Paul will get you killed one day, little lady."

"No, it wasn't his fault, I would go," she said stoutly.

"Whose little girl are you—do you know?" queried Dick.

"I think I'm muvver's," she said uncertainly.

"You only think, eh? Do you know your name?"

"Daisy."

"What a pretty name—keep your leg still, what other name?"

"I'm Daisy Needham, my whole name."

Dick lifted his head. The little girl was looking intently at him with a pair of beautiful grey eyes.

At the same instant the edge of the bandage fell back across Dick's hand and he saw the owner's name in clear black letters, "Ruth Needham."

Her child!

For a moment the sea and sky merged into one, and everything went red before his eyes.

"Where's your mother?" he said suddenly.

"Is that lady your sweetheart?"

Little Daisy seemed startled by his abrupt voice. She wrinkled her little face and prepared to cry.

"I haven't done anything," she said piteously.

He took the child in his arms.

"Don't be frightened, darling, tell me, where is your mother?" he said repenting his violence.

"Over there," pointing vaguely to the cliffs in the distance.

Dick strained his eyesight but could see nothing.

"Where's your Daddy, dearie?" he asked again.

There was no answer.

"Don't you know, Daisy?"

"Yes, Paul said he's with his muvver."

"Whose mother?"

"Paul's."

A light broke on Dick. For the first time he noticed the little child was in black. With a sudden gasp he realised the situation.

Rising, he reached for his straw hat.

"Tell me where Mammy is?" he asked in a voice strangely calm.

The child pointed out a heap of boulders.

"Over behind there," she said.

"Run then and play with Paul," he said and started in the direction.

Time, age, possible forgetfulness, everything past faded from his mind.

She was there, she was free!

Without pausing a moment he strode rapidly on past the boulders.

Resting, sheltered in a warm corner, was a slight fair woman in black. She had been reading, but the book lay unheeded on her lap and her eyes looked dreamily out to sea.

A shadow fell across her, and she looked up and met his gaze fixed upon her.

A faint smile came over her face, and she held out her hands to him.

"Dick," was all she said.

He took them in his own without a word. What need had they to speak, the question was asked and the question was answered in that one glance.

The seagulls wheeled overhead and the salt breeze flapped the pages of her book, but neither noticed.

"At last you have come," she murmured, "I have waited so long for you, Dick."

"I never knew till now you were here."

"I couldn't come to you—I waited for you to come until"—here a blush came into her pale face—"until I couldn't wait any longer, and I sent Daisy."

"My darling, my own, my only love, if I had only known!"

"Yes, I told her to go and ask you to tie up her little leg."

There was a long pause again. Dick had nothing to say.

Her fair head was resting on his shoulder, and the weary weight of years seemed suddenly to have lifted off his heart.

All he wanted was to read the love in her face and rest content.

How long they sat thus neither of them knew, but suddenly Dick became aware of the vicinity of Paul.

Paul stood looking at his father in an astounded manner. Never in the course of his short life had anyone rested on his shoulder but his own small self.

A light broke on his understanding after a while. His beloved Daddy was evidently in the height of enjoyment, judging from his countenance, so Paul thought he would hazard a few remarks on the subject

"Is that lady your sweetheart?" he said curiously.

Dick replied she was.

"The same as Daisy is mine?"

"Yes."

"Oh, she's Daisy's mother, isn't she?"

"She is, my boy,"—pressing the little hand he held in his own.

"And do sweethearts do as you do?"

"Always."

"Oh!" the little boy seemed mystified.

"I'm going to marry Daisy, are you going to marry your sweetheart?"

"Ruth, what shall I tell him?" Dick whispered.

For answer she looked at him with a smile.

"Yes, Paul, I am," he said.

"And is it nice, like that?"

"Very, now run and dig castles and don't ask anything more," concluded Dick, tired of his youthful son's interrogation.

There was another long pause and then Dick was once more brought out of heaven, and in no uncertain manner.

Little Daisy was screaming, while Paul, very red and masterful was holding her down with the assistance of a spade and both arms.

"You shall, you shall! It's right and you can't play if you don't," he shouted.

"What on earth are you doing? Leave off tormenting the child, you shall go to school my lad, if you give any more bother," cried his parent.

"Well, we're playing sweethearts and Daisy doesn't understand, and won't be bear-hugged."

"So because she wouldn't let you kiss her, I suppose you beat her. Your methods are primitive, Paul."

"I didn't beat her, Daddy, I hit her with the spade. Did you hit the lady when she wouldn't be your sweetheart?"

Dick put his hand under Ruth's chin and lifted it up, "Did I sweethoart?"

"I don't think so, although I daresay I deserved it," she replied, and lifting her head a little more their lips met in a long passionate kiss.

Little Paul was intensely interested. This was the pinnacle of sweethearting if only Daisy could be made to see it in the same light. What a grand game, with Daddy and the lady and all!

But Daisy refused point-blank, and although Paul had repeated recourse to the spade, his barbarous overtures were unavailing.

Finally Ruth solved the problem for her now weeping little daughter.

Drying the child's eyes she said, "See me do it," and putting her arms round Dick she kissed him.

Daisy was conquered, and forthwith embraced the delighted Paul.

Dick looked up to see his young son imitating his every action, and broke out into a laugh.

A great hearty laugh, the laugh of a young man, for when one is happy what matters how old one is, and after all, Love is always young.

Erroll Stanhope.

LOOK OUT FOR OUR NEXT WEEK'S COVER. IT IS A REMARKABLE ONE.

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HER LETTER.

"What have you got to say to me?"

"Nothing."

"Why did you send for me?"

A flush of red rose to her face.

"I thought, yesterday, when I wrote, that I had something to say, but now——"

"You have changed your mind, Miss Austin? That is a woman's privilege and you have used it ruthlessly."

"Yes, I know. Forgive me. I meant to do my best."

He frowned and his expression was not good to see.

"Her best," And this is what she had done.

Last Spring he had thought himself one of the happiest men alive, engaged to be married to this girl, Eva Austin; he loved her passionately, and believed her to be the ideal type of womanhood, high principled, truthful, gentle—in fact, almost faultless.

One day, a few months ago, she had written to break off her engagement, a short letter which was a masterpiece of polite reserve and feminine cruelty. She regretted if she had caused him any pain—oh, yes, regrets cost nothing—she was conscious of the honour that he had paid her—she wished to remain his friend—she returned his ring.

Captain Humphrey travelled many miles to demand an explanation of his affianced wife. He was refused admittance, his letters were returned unopened by her sister—Eva was ill and could not write. The truth stared him in the face; in plain English he had been hopelessly jilted. Then he vowed to forget Eva Austin's existence and congratulated himself upon his freedom from domestic ties.

To-day, as he stood in the parlour of the hotel to which she had summoned him, he had so far overlooked his determination to forget her existence, that his anger was waxing fierce against her. Why had she brought him here? To be made a fool of a second time? No, and a thousand times, no.

"If you did your best, Miss Austin, may I ask what your worst would have been?"

She moved quickly, almost as if he had struck her.

"I cannot explain. If you knew how it all happened you would perhaps believe—you might perhaps think a little better of me."

He stood bolt upright, speechless. He was struggling with his pride; in his heart of hearts he was longing to take her in his arms, to tell her that for him she was the only woman in the world, with all her faults.

Her faults. They were unpardonable.

"I should be glad to think well of any lady," he said at last, lightly, "more especially of a lady who once honoured me with her friendship."

"Yes," she said gently, "it was because of that friend that I wrote. I had a favour to ask you. Now—it is not necessary. I am sorry."

There was a brief silence, then she said:

"There are changes in our family. Ella is going to be married; the engagement is very sudden, it was only settled this morning."

Ella was the younger sister of whom he had so often been jealous in those forgotten days.

"Allow me to congratulate you."

He bowed and turned to go; the interview was a farce.

At the door she stopped him.

"Do you start—to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"Good-bye. We, that is, Ella and I, wish you a happy return."

Considering their former intimacy, this was barely the farewell that good manners demanded, nothing more.

His hand was on the lock. Something else she said, her voice was almost inaudible:

"I will pray for you."

He shut the door quietly, there should be no melodramatic display of temper on his part. Arrived at the bottom of the stairs, he missed his hat. Had he left his purse or his watch in that room, no power on earth would have sent him back—but his hat.

He ran back hastily and knocked. There was no answer. So much the better. He entered the room and seized his property. Turning to go, he heard the rustle of draperies. She was there, standing on the spot where he had left her, with her hands clasped to her face.

* * * * * *

Under the cold star-lit sky he had lain for hours. The fight was over. In the distance he could discern the figures of the wounded and the dead.

The victory was with his men—so much he knew before he fell. And now, patience. They would find him by-and-by. If not, then the end could not be far off, not very far. Patience. The stars flickered and faded. He saw a room, with pale pink walls, flowers, a work basket on the table—nothing escaped his notice. Eva was there, she had on a grey dress and a gold chain round her neck.

Were there tears in her eyes? There were tears in his. "I will pray for you."

That is what she said at parting, and he had pretended not to hear. He saw her again praying for the man who had not condescended to accept her good wishes.

In the old days he had often smiled at her earnestness, and called her a little Puritan; in later times he had raged at her as a hypocrite.

Do hypocrites look like that?

What did it matter what he called her? His one wish now was that she should know that he died blessing her. With infinite difficulty he found his pocket-book and wrote her name on the flyleaf. His hand trembled; before the pencil slipped from his grasp he scrawled feebly: "God bless you, Eva."

The orderly brought a bundle of letters into the shed which had been hastily converted into a hospital. The men crowded eagerly round him; even Captain Humphrey, who was "dangerously" wounded, turned an anxious face towards the messenger.

The captain recognised the shape and colour of the envelope that was brought to his bedside; the handwriting, too, was familiar. It was Ella Austin's.

"Now that I am happily married I must free my conscience and tell you our secret. Think as badly of me as you can, Eva sacrificed herself for me. I told her that I cared for you, that is why she wrote that letter. Afterwards, when she was ill, I sent back your letters without her knowledge."

The lines jumped up and down before the sick man's eyes; he read on:

"Eva wanted to put things right between you and me; that is why she sent for me before you left. Didn't you guess? She found out her mistake before you came and took all the blame on herself to shield me. You will never forgive me, I should not, but I can't bear to think that you are still misjudging her."

* * * * * *

"Will he pull through, doctor?" asked a young officer that night. He it was who had found the captain and brought him into shelter.

"Pull through? Yes, now his mind's at rest."

"What's he been worrying about?"

"What do we all worry about, eh?"

The officer did not answer—he wasn't going to tell his secrets to the wily doctor.

"The first night he wanted to risk his life writing or dictating letters home. Now, I think he's satisfied with the news that to-day's mail brought him. Look at him."

"He's asleep," said the other in a whisper; "and, doctor, he's got a letter tucked away under his pillow."

H. Mackenzie.

Storiettes

But He Didn't.

Daughter: "He says he worships the ground I walk on." Farmer: "He does, eh? Then p'raps he'll help me to pay off the mortgage on it."

Too Great an Alteration.

He: "Will you love me if I give up all my bad habits?" She (protesting): "But, George, how could you expect me to love a perfect stranger?"

Anticipation.

Anderson: "My! How meekly your wife obeys you. Is she afraid of you?" Billings: "Not much. She's working me for a new bonnet."

Her Very Own.

Edwin (tenderly touching her tresses): "Sweet one, let me be like this lovely hair." Angelina (tremulously): "What, dearest, what would you be?" Edwin (rapturously): "All your own."

Knew What it Meant.

"Ah, Jones, old man," said Hicks, as he and Jones walked home from the club; "there's a light in the window for you. You married men——" "By George, so there is!" returned Jones. "Let's go back to the club!"

His Birthday Present.

"Henry!" she said disconsolately, "you didn't give me a birthday gift." "By Jove, that's so!" said Henry. "But, you see, I can't realise that you ever have birthdays." Then she was happy, and he smiled the mean, subtle smile of a man who has saved money.

To Smoke or Not to Smoke.

A contemporary, opposed to the use of tobacco, says: "The women ought to make a pledge not to kiss a man who uses tobacco, and it will soon break up the practice." It would be broken up much sooner, were the ladies to pledge themselves to kiss every man who does not use it.

The Uses of Astronomy.

Rural Uncle: "Now, wot's th' use o' teaching gals all these new-fangled studies? Wot good is this 'ere astronomy you're studyin'?" Niece from town: "Why uncle, it's a delightful subject to talk about on moonlight evenings. We point out Venus, and then the young man says something pretty, and then—see that ring!"

A Warning.

Fond Mother: "Now look here, George! I want you to break off with that girl. She is very pretty and all that; but I know her too well to want you to risk your life and happiness by marrying her. Why, she knows no more about housekeeping than I do about Greek—not a bit!" George: "Perhaps not; but she can learn." Mother: "After marriage is rather late for that, George." George: "But you said yourself that you did not know a thing about housekeeping until after you were married." Mother: "Very true, George—and your poor father died of dyspepsia twenty years ago."

Dispatch in Marriage.

A quick courtship is chronicled by a Georgia paper. A man stopped at a house in Douglasville and asked a lady for a glass of water. When he had quenched his thirst he asked if she was married or single. She replied "Widow." On which the man said he was a widower in search of a wife. "Walk in," answered the widow, "and we'll talk the matter over." One hour later the twain were made one by the nearest minister.

He was Nervous.

She: "Why do you toy so nervously with that fan—are you afraid of it?" He (gallantly): "I am afraid of anything that could produce a coolness between us."

Getting On.

"How is your daughter getting on with the piano, Jones?" "First rate. She can play with both hands now. Says she'll be able to play with her ear in six months."

Cruel Candour.

"I was hit on the head and knocked senseless by a brick-bat when I was a boy," said Mr. Dullpate. "Dear me," replied Miss Brasher, "and is it absolutely incurable?"

Very Sudden.

Frank Fairleigh: "Yes, Miss Antique, to be frank with you——" Miss Antique (with a chirp): "Oh, Mr. Fairleigh, of course, you may be Frank with me—but this is so sudden."

Bachelor Ignorance.

Young Mother: "He is somewhat cross to-day. He is teething." Old Bachelor (in great awe of the mite of humanity): "And when do you expect him to commence—er—commence—hairing?"

Unappreciated.

"So you wrote her a poem?" "Yes," replied the young man sadly. "What did she say?" "She said she admired my letter, but she didn't quite understand why every line began with a capital letter."

All the Difference.

He: "I am rather in favour of the English than the American mode of spelling." She: "Yes?" He: "Yes, indeed! Take 'parlour,' for instance. Having 'u' in it makes all the difference in the world."

Her Economy.

Husband: "Have you done your best to economise this month, Mary, as I requested?" Wife (brightly): "Oh, yes; I spoke to the grocer, the butcher, and the landlord, and got them to put off sending in their bills till next month."

A Bad Blunder.

Visitor (in gaol, to prisoner): "What are you here for?" Prisoner: "For stealing." Visitor: "What did you steal?" Prisoner: "I stole a girl's affections." Visitor: "Well, that is no infraction of the law?" Prisoner: "H—m, I carried 'em off with her father's horse and cart."

His Wife was Away.

Kickwood (to his old schoolfellow, whom he has met by chance): "Come into the house, old man. Here's a bottle. Have a drink." Bunker: "Does your wife let you drink?" Kickwood: "Why, of course! Have a cigar, won't you?" Bunker: "Thanks. Does your wife (puff) allow you to smoke (puff, puff) in the house?" Kickwood: "Certainly! We'll have dinner, and then we'll go round to the club and meet some of the boys." Bunker: "Does your wife let you go to the club?" Kickwood: "Why, of course!" Bunker: "Um—where is your wife?" Kickwood: "She is visiting relatives in the country."

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FIVE SHILLINGS A DAY FOR LIFE!

A Unique Prize Offered to Readers.

The offer of such a sum as **Five Shillings a Day for Life** at first strikes one as being merely a novelty. It is a difficult matter for people to realise what **Five Shillings a Day for Life** would actually mean to them.

Supposing you live to the age of seventy-five—a by no means outside estimate under natural conditions—then you will have received one or other of the huge sums shown below:—

If your age now is		you will receive more than		If your age now is		you will receive more than	
„	40	„	£3,150	„	20	„	£5,000
„	30	„	£4,100	„	15	„	£5,450

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO ...

On the next page you will find twelve pictures. Each of these pictures consists of a certain number of objects. These objects, either singly or collectively, represent the name of a town or place in the United Kingdom.

What you have to do is to find the town or place with the longest name entirely from the names of objects depicted in the pictures (or from their phonetic equivalents).

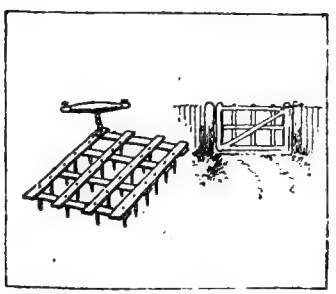
An "object" does not include sky or shading necessary for a correct drawing.

When you have done this, write the name down in the space provided, and keep the page by you. Then obtain a copy of the *Royal Magazine* for June (now on sale) and discover the names depicted in the next twelve pictures. Don't send in this page until you see the closing date stated in the *Royal Magazine*.

... Chief Conditions. ...

1. The names must be clearly written in ink. (*Use a fine pen.*)
2. Only one name is allowed under each picture.
3. No alterations are to be allowed in the words. If you have made a mistake in the spelling, cross the word out and write it again.
4. The name of the place with the greatest number of letters depicted in each picture is the correct solution, but if there are two or more such names of places depicted in one picture with an equal number of letters, then each will be counted correct.
5. No competitor may receive the assistance of professional competition solvers who send out circulars, or whose advertisements appear in the Press. Every person who enters for this competition must do so only on this understanding, and winners will be asked to satisfy us that they have not contravened this condition.

Every competitor must abide by the conditions stated in the ROYAL MAGAZINE.



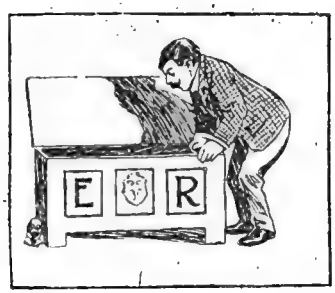
CORRECT SOLUTION: HARROGATE.
INCORRECT SOLUTIONS: (1) HARROW: Because it comprises fewer letters than Harrogate. (2) GATE (for same reason.)

The Prize of 5s. a Day for Life

Will be given to the competitor from whom the Editor of the *Royal Magazine* receives a set of pages containing the greatest number of correct solutions.

The sum of £100 will be divided, at the discretion of the Editor, amongst those who come next.

All the names depicted in the sketches will be found as printed in the list of Provincial Post Offices in the Post Office Guide, which may be consulted at any Post Office, or may be purchased for 6d.



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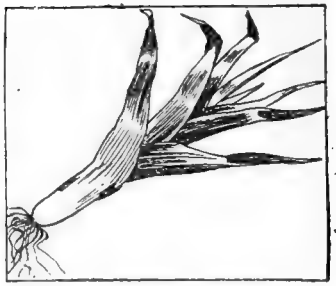

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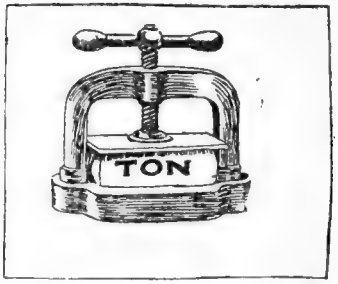

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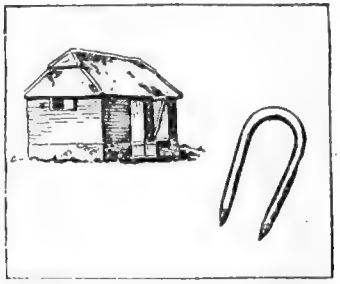

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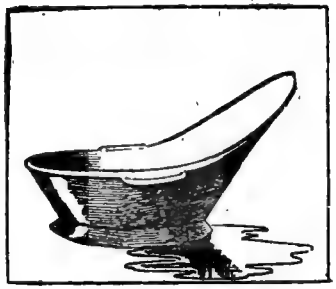

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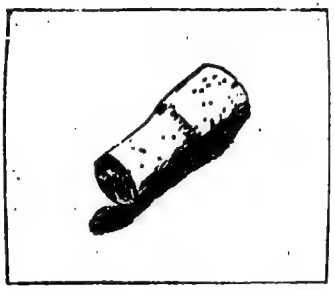

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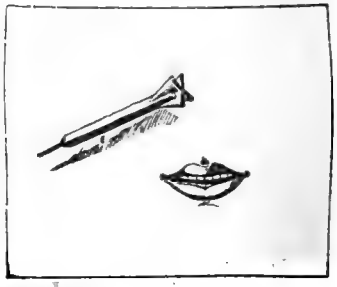

12.....

Name..... Address.....

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THE BRAINS OF THE FORCE.

A Series of Detective Mysteries by R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "Hate, the Destroyer," "A Daughter of Mystery," "The Golden Dwarf," &c., &c.

THE RIDDLE OF THE GIPSY CARAVAN.

CHAPTER I.

The Camp by the Wayside.

"Beg pardon, sir, but might you be going anywhere near Brickfield Lane this afternoon?"

Lucius Shand checked the quick strides that were carrying him through the shallow puddles and greasy mud of the worst road in the division and held his umbrella at an angle with the driving March rain. A constable in glistening waterproof cape and soaked helmet had accosted him.

"I believe," said the surgeon, "that I am passing the top of it. Is there any reason why I should go down?"

"Well, sir," was the answer, "I suppose it would be pretty much an errand of mercy, though these gipsies are worth a bit occasionally. But about an hour ago a man from one of the encampments there, came up to me and asked where he could find a doctor who would go to his daughter; she was dying, he feared. I ventured to suggest his sending as far as your place, sir, thinking you'd be less stiff over doing a good turn of the sort than some of the medical gentlemen round. He said he would, but seeing you in the neighbourhood, sir, I felt it would save time if I mentioned it."

"Very considerate on your part, constable," observed Lucius Shand; "which of the encampments must I make for? There are, as you say, several."

"The one that lies close to the edge of the brickfield itself, sir," he was told, "at the bend of the lane. You'll see a yellow caravan and an old grey horse, gone in the knees. There's only that and one hut, sir."

"Good," said the surgeon, "then I'll drop in on the Romanies and secure a blessing, if I can't a fee. Dirty day, isn't it?" And, returning the constable's salute, Lucius Shand splashed off down the muddy road.

Ten minutes later he had reached the upper extremity of a wretched, semi-rustic thoroughfare, bordered by a few score acres of clayey grassland. This was Brickfield Lane, and he went down it at his usual rapid pace.

The encampment referred to by the constable, was easily distinguished from those adjacent, which stood at a greater distance from the gravel footpath. The yellow van and the melancholy grey horse were also in evidence—a thin wisp of smoke rose from the stove-pipe of the vehicle. The surgeon crossed a strip of sodden green, mounted the steps of the caravan, and knocked at the door. A woman opened it—a woman old and stooping, with a tanned, ugly visage, glittering coal-black eyes, and a long nose over a nut-cracker chin.

"What d'you want?" she snarled, after an eagle glance at his face and garments. Lucius Shand closed his umbrella.

"I am a doctor," he replied, "Dr. Shand. You have a person ill here—I understand you were advised to send for me."

"Oh," grumbled the old crone, "Jan did go, but you were out." She leant from the doorway, made a trumpet of her withered palms, and shouted in the direction of the hut.

The summons was answered by the appearance of a swarthy, yet unmistakably handsome fellow in soiled, nondescript garments. Raven-haired, lean, athletic, sullen, he presented a sinister picture as he strolled to the wooden ladder that gave access to the caravan. As he approached it, the gipsy woman called to him in the foreign-sounding lingo of the Romany folk. Lucius Shand understood it—his accomplishments were many and various—though he gave no visible sign of comprehension.

"Afternoon, sir," said the new-comer, civilly enough, "it's my daughter, Miriam. She's been ailing a long time, but for the last day or two she's been terrible bad—won't eat anything or sit up, just seems to doze and get weaker and weaker: doesn't she, mother?"

The surgeon glanced at the speaker under his bushy auburn brows—there was an odd, whining ring in the voice of the younger gipsy.

"Yes, indeed," assented the elder, "and yet we've done our best for her always, sir, our very best."

"Quite so," remarked Lucius Shand, sharply, "suppose, however, that you allow me to see your daughter, Mr.—Mr.—"

"My name is Lyle, sir," said the man; "Jan Lyle. Let the doctor go inside, mother, you're blocking up the door."

The old crone changed her position with alacrity, and the surgeon entered the cramped and awkward interior of the caravan. At its further end was a sort of berth, and in this lay a feminine figure. Lucius Shand started—the face on the pillow, though of an obviously gipsy cast and as duskily white as ivory, had a rare and delicate beauty. Neither it nor the arm that rested on the counterpane was in the least degree wasted—their soft roundness rather suggested a blooming womanhood.

The surgeon took up the nerveless wrist and felt for the pulse, then bent to place his ear over the region of the heart. When he rose, it was to lift the drooped lids and peer into the brown pupils.

A square of mirror hung over the bed, against the blank wall of the vehicle, and by it Lucius Shand saw that the two gipsies had followed him into the van. Ignorant of his covert survey they were watching him keenly—the surgeon studied their villainous countenances at his leisure.

"You have called me too late," he said at last, "your daughter, Mr. Lyle, is dead."

The elder gipsy broke into a wail, and her son recoiled as if in horror and amazement. Lucius Shand's fingers were lingering upon the white wrist, his brows had contracted, and a furrow of profound thought showed itself between them.

A murmur reached him as he stood there—a murmur in the Romany speech that is known to few in the world save the gipsy tribes themselves and even among them is decaying. Mrs. Lyle had whispered a sentence to her companion. Whatever its purport was, it served to smooth the furrow out of the surgeon's forehead. He turned from the bedside and picked up his umbrella.

"I am sorry I can do nothing," he said, with a sympathetic air, "but, after all, we doctors are only human."

The gipsy woman threw her apron over her face and sobbed loudly—her son drew a step closer, fishing a dingy leather purse out of his pocket.

"It's a blow to us, sir," he mumbled, "but you've had the trouble of coming, and if we are poor, we can pay our way

and there'll be the death-certificate. I reckon it was her heart, sir, wasn't it? Miriam suffered a lot with her heart, poor dear, faintings and flutterings, and such-like."

His black eyes stole cautiously to the surgeon's impassive countenance as he shook a few silver coins from the purse. Lucius Shand motioned them aside.

"Don't worry about that," he said, "I was in these parts on other business. As to the death-certificate, I'll —I'll send you it on—upon the proper form."

Jan Lyle hesitated; a look of disappointment had flickered across his features. The divisional surgeon noticed it. Yet he strode unconcernedly to the exit of the caravan and descended the steep stair. From the edge of the brickfield he struck up the miry lane, moving with the singularly swift walk of which he alone seemed to possess the secret, and screening himself with his umbrella against the pelting rain.

His progress was suddenly arrested. Passing a thick hedgerow he felt his arm touched, and, swinging round, perceived a young fellow in the garb of a workman, with heavy boots, corduroys, and soft cap, beneath which was a face incongruously sensitive and refined.

"Excuse me, sir," stammered the other, "but are you a doctor?"

"That is my profession," answered Lucius Shand, "is anything wrong—are you unwell?"

"No, no!" was the reply, and the speaker's voice was both pleasant and cultivated, "but I saw you enter the caravan up the road. I have observed you frequently in the neighbourhood, and guessed you must be a medical man. Do you mind telling me if you happened to see, during your visit, a lady—a—a young woman, that is, rather tall and dark, with brown eyes and hair?"

"I did," said the divisional surgeon, regarding him with interest, "it was to her I was called."

"Then she is ill!" exclaimed the other; "I knew it!" He clutched at Lucius Shand's arm. "But not seriously?" he pleaded, "don't say that, for Heaven's sake, don't say that!"

There was a moment's pause before the surgeon replied. The response itself was curiously put.

"If you will inquire at the van yonder," he said, "you will learn that I was summoned too late to be of any use."

His questioner staggered. "Dead, dead!" he gasped, "my wife dead! Oh, it is impossible, impossible!" He turned away, with bowed head and shaking shoulders. When he looked up again at Lucius Shand he had regained his self-control, and his expression was strangely stern and cold.

"Then I am free to revenge myself," the surgeon was told; "will you have the goodness to direct me to the nearest police-station."

Lucius Shand pulled at the lobe of his right ear. "May I ask," he said, "what you propose to do there?"

"You may," rejoined the other, "I go to charge John Lyle and Sarah Lyle, his mother, with carrying off by force and detaining against her will, my wife, Miriam West, John Lyle's daughter, and with directly or indirectly causing her death. I am Joscelyn West, an artist, and despite these clothes, what I suppose you would call a gentleman."

"What d'you want?" she snarled, after an eagle glance at his face and garments.

The surgeon nibbled reflectively an end of his moustache.

"If you will take my advice, Mr. West," he answered, "you will do no such thing. Listen—" and he whispered deliberately in Joscelyn West's ear.

"Great Heavens!" cried the artist, "but why—why—?"

Lucius Shand interrupted.

"Leave yourself in my hands, Mr. West," he said, "or you may have cause to repent it. In that group of encampments there are a score of lawless fellows, while we could only hope for the possible assistance of a constable now half a mile away. A journey to the police-station would waste time. Pardon my impertinence, Mr. West, but your story lacks corroboration, while your attire is that of a person

in a humble sphere. You might secure investigation, but you would certainly meet with delay."

Joscelyn West coloured. "I—I can easily explain," he responded. "My marriage was an unusual one. I encountered Miriam Lyle by chance, in a rustic corner of England. Her mother had been a girl of position and some small fortune, who had been decoyed into a mad marriage with that handsome scoundrel Jan, or John Lyle. She died young, and old Mrs. Lyle brought up her one baby—Miriam. I saw her, asked her to sit for me, came to care for her—she was her mother's, not her father's child—she gave her folks the slip, and I married her in London."

The narrator drew a long breath and set his teeth. "Before that," he said, "her life had been a martyrdom. The Lyles are practically professional criminals—Miriam told me enough to hang her father twice over—he has been a burglar, thief, assassin. He chose to believe that her marriage with a respectable member of society threatened his neck, though what she told me would not have been evidence, and Miriam would never have betrayed him for her mother's sake. However, he stole her from me, warning me, by one of his rascally comrades, that the penalty of pursuing her would be her death or mine, possibly both."

Lucius Shand nodded. "Hence your disguise," he commented.

"Exactly," rejoined the artist. "Pursue her I did, and through the length and breadth of England. Once or twice I got on their track, only to lose the trail again. A week ago I picked it up in earnest and saw Lyle, as I fear he saw me. Since then I have been prowling round, seeking to ascertain if Miriam were with the Lyles or some other band of gipsies, for, of course, there is a strong freemasonry among them. Finally, noticing you enter the Lyle's caravan, I ventured to accost you."

"Quite so," said the surgeon. "Well, now, Mr. West, you can do nothing better at present than go down to my surgery, where I will join you shortly. Here is my card."

He whipped out the pasteboard, looked at his watch, and buttoned his ulster.

"Meanwhile," he added, "I must hasten to put in hand one or two matters of considerable importance. Be reassured, Mr. West, they relate to your affairs. You are in division B., and in Division B, Lucius Shand, M.R.C.S., is not without power, though he says it as shouldn't. For the moment, adieu; you go that way, I this."

Lucius Shand showed his white teeth in a cheerful smile, and set off down the rain-swept lane. After a lengthy pause of indecision, the artist took the opposite direction, walking with slow, reluctant steps, and occasionally turning to glance at the mysterious caravan.

CHAPTER II.

"I Was Right, After All."

"Now, ma'm, we're sorry, but it's no use resisting us in the execution of our duty. I am the coroner's officer and I've a waggon and half a dozen constables outside—we know you gipsies don't like complying with coroners' orders and we are prepared to enforce ours, if necessary. So let us in without any fuss."

A powerful yet insinuating pressure was applied to the door of the caravan by the edge of the road. Mrs. Lyle was forced to beat a retreat, muttering to herself as she went.

The intruder—a self-possessed, uniformed figure—gained the interior of the vehicle, removing his peaked cap considerately.

"Dr. Shand, ma'am," he said, "has reported to the coroner for the district that he was called to a patient here and found her dead. Under the circumstances there must be an examination and an inquest."

"But—but," faltered the gipsy woman, "the doctor hasn't been gone an hour; why should everything be done in such a hurry?"

"Our instructions, ma'am," she was told, imperturbably, and the official leant out of the narrow doorway to motion his assistant. In the lane close by stood a light, one-horsed conveyance of grained wood, with a large entrance at the rear and windows of fluted glass. It bore an unmistakable similarity to an ambulance. About it was a small squad of police.

Superintended by the coroner's representatives, a couple of constables opened the conveyance, drew out a stretcher and carried it into the caravan. When they reappeared it supported the inanimate form of the gipsy girl whose pulseless wrist Lucius Shand had fingered so doubtfully.

The old crone shook her impotent fist at them from her own threshold. "If my son hadn't gone to arrange about the funeral," she screamed, "you shouldn't take her. He'll make you pay for this; he'll make you pay!"

Unheeding her threats and anathemas, the men carried their burden to the waiting waggon, lifted it in and closed the doors. The coroner's officer and his assistant mounted to the box beside the driver and the conveyance went off at a swift yet easy trot. The constables that had accompanied it fell into line and marched gravely away, a sergeant on the flank of the little file.

As the lightly-hung waggon moved off, someone who had been seated within it rose and dropped on one knee by the stretcher. It was Lucius Shand. Nor was he alone—a woman in the neat grey garb of a hospital nurse stood beside him.

The surgeon took a stethoscope from his hat, put the hat itself on the floor of the ambulance, and placed the instrument above the heart of the gipsy girl. Bending over the silent form he listened intently, then shook his head, and turned to extract a keen steel blade from a bag at his elbow. With this he made a deft incision in a vein of the girl's fore-arm. No blood flowed—the flesh, as he touched it, was icily cold.

Lucius Shand rubbed his chin thoughtfully and felt for his match-box. He struck a vesta and held the palm of Miriam West in front of it. A faint tinge of pink showed at the margin of the fingers.

A low whistle broke from the surgeon's lips and once more he had recourse to the bag. The nurse watched him intelligently.

"Lift her up a little, nurse," he said, opening a bottle with a ground-glass stopper. A stinging, acrid odour filled the ambulance—the smell of ammonia. Lucius Shand was pouring a portion of the fluid into the reservoir of a chloroform-mask—he fitted it cautiously over the mouth and nostrils of the gipsy girl. Drastic as was the restorative it had not the slightest effect.

Lucius Shand put down the mask and pondered. He roused himself to fish out of the well-stored bag a circular mirror and laid it, face downward, on the lips and nose of Miriam West. At the end of five minutes he whisked it off and inverted it. There was a dim mist on one part of the mirror that vanished while he looked. A smile of gratification flickered across the surgeon's features and he glanced from the window impatiently. The ambulance was just entering the courtyard of a great hospital. Lucius Shand addressed himself to the nurse, upon whom not a motion of the surgeon had been lost.

"Blankets, nurse," he instructed, "and plenty of them. I was right, after all."

"You usually are, sir," ventured the nurse, and again a smile crossed her companion's countenance as he got down

and hurried into the huge red-brick building. The dusk was falling—deepened by the gloom of the wet March day. As Lucius Shand went along the wide central corridor a youthful house-surgeon met him.

"Well," said the latter, banteringly, "and have you discovered any justification for turning our ambulance into a mortuary-waggon?"

"Come and see," was the answer; "have the operating-theatre lit up, there's a good fellow and——" The rest of the sentence dropped into an undertone as the two medical men walked off together.

When the unconscious form of the gipsy girl had been borne into a large, white-tiled apartment and laid on an ingenious table under a concentrated yet soft radiance, the house-surgeon cried out:

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "what a lovely creature—as faultless and as chilly as a statue. I'm afraid it's all up with her, though, Shand."

"Give us the strongest current you've got," said Lucius Shand, pointing to an adjacent stand, with a couple of coils of green-wrapped wire conspicuous among its vulcanite fittings; "and for Heaven's sake don't waste any time—her temperature's lowering fast."

With expert hands the two adjusted the instrument and its damp sponge "contacts," while the nurse slipped a rubber insulating sheet under their patient. The house-surgeon seized the highly-geared handle and spun it round with his eye on the index. Lucius Shand had put his fingers on the nerveless wrist.

"More, more!" he said, and the operator bent to his task. Suddenly there was a long and shuddering inspiration, and the graceful head of the gipsy girl moved abruptly. Still the handle spun and a cry burst from the pallid lips. The divisional surgeon signed to his colleague, the current of electricity was moderated and then stopped.

"Where am I, oh, where am I?" faltered a girlish voice. Lucius Shand answered soothingly.

"In the Royal Hospital," he said, "see, here is your nurse. Do not excite yourself; all is well."

The girl's brown head was raised again to glance at the group about her.

The artist was kneeling by his wife's bed—one of the gipsy girl's small brown palms lay on his curly head.

"And you got me away from father and grannie?" she murmured, "oh, I am glad! But what have you been doing to me—have I been very ill; was there an accident?"

The divisional surgeon motioned to the nurse to remove the damp sponges which formed the electrical connections.

"Nothing of any importance," he replied, "you slept a trifle too long for our liking, so we wakened you rather forcibly. And now you shall go comfortably to bed and have something to eat. By-the-bye, is there anyone you would wish us to send for?"

The pretty face under the intense light looked up at him eagerly and the gipsy girl clasped her hands.

"My husband—my," she said, "Mr. Joscelyn West—oh, but I don't know where he will be or how you can find out." And the brown eyes filled with tears.

"Calm yourself, Mrs. West," Lucius Shand bade her, cheerfully, "I think I can produce him within the next half-hour.

For the present, we will leave you to your nurse, who will see that you are taken good care of."

Evading his patient's breathless questions, he went down to the hall and sent a messenger to his surgery for the artist.

"I've kept you waiting a dickens of a time," he said, when Joscelyn West arrived, still in his rough disguise, "but if you will go up into Ward 8 and ask for Mrs. West, I think you can be persuaded to excuse the delay."

The artist wrung the hand of the divisional surgeon and tried to speak, but could not. Then he darted up the stone stairs with the speed of a greyhound. Lucius Shand followed him leisurely and peeped into the ward. The artist was kneeling by his wife's bed—one of the gipsy girl's small brown palms lay on his curly head.

Lucius Shand chuckled and strolled away downstairs. His *confrère* of the hospital overtook him.

"My dear fellow!" said the young house-surgeon, "what on earth made you think that woman wasn't dead? You admitted that she was cold and had no perceptible pulse."

The divisional surgeon smiled. "Her eyes," he responded, "the pupils were contracted to pin-points. That suggested drugging, especially as there was no sign of wasting or illness about her. So, by way of a ruse, I said that she was dead, and her old witch of a grandmother muttered to the rascally father—in Romany, which I happen to understand—'He is fooled, right enough; ask him for the certificate now.' That was sufficient for me. I promised to send on the required document, and left—to drop across the pursuing husband in disguise and discover the key to the whole romance. The rest was easy—a coroner's order and your ambulance and they were fairly checkmated."

"But what was the object of the drugging," demanded the house-surgeon; "they didn't want to bury her alive?"

"Hardly," assented Lucius Shand, "more probably they proposed to have a mock funeral on the strength of my precious death certificate—a device which would have effectually put Mr. Joscelyn West off the further pursuit of his wife. Of course, they counted without what Shakespeare calls 'crowner's quest law' and overlooked the dreadful possibility that some practitioner in a hurry might have performed an autopsy under it and so have turned a mimic death into a real one."

The house-surgeon shivered. "What a ghastly mishap it would have been!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Lucius Shand, "the least bit of ill-luck and Mrs. West might have been done for completely. As it was I had to chance leaving her for half an hour or so; she might have drifted away in that terrible sleep. But I dare not betray any suspicion before I was able to act. The drug was probably chloral, but it may have been something of a vegetable nature."

"Suppose you come and have a bit of dinner with me," remarked the house-surgeon, interestedly, "and tell me the balance of the yarn."

"Sorry," said Lucius Shand, "but I've got to go and report to the coroner and stop him sending out summonses for a jury to sit on a living person. If I could only get those two Lyles a term of penal, I'd be happy. But who the dickens could make anything of this case in the witness-box? I should be laughed out of court as a visionary. And though I believe Lyle himself could be swung for more than one crime, we should have to ask his daughter to convict him, which wouldn't be quite the thing."

Oddly enough, however, Lucius Shand's desire was fulfilled in an unexpected fashion, and both the Lyles went to penal servitude for a long term of years in connection with an atrocious manslaughter. Not only Joscelyn West but the police of two Southern counties had been searching for them. The crime was probably the only single one of all their manifold villainies which they had failed effectively to conceal.

The concluding story of this series, published next Tuesday, is entitled "The Affair in the Prince's Yacht." This will be followed by a brilliant series of true stories written by a lady's companion, and revealing many startling secrets of high life in London Society.

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In the interests of health, no! The superabundance of flimsy material tends to harbour disease germs, and therefore the plainer the costume the healthier. Some women, however, cannot wear skirts made of thick, heavy material, owing to attacks of dizziness, languor, and general weakness. The least weight is a burden to them and brings on these attacks. What are they to do? The answer is simple. As a remedy for the above complaints Bile Beans for Biliousness are unequalled. Try them. They also cure skin eruptions, pimples, blotches, and all blood impurities. The following case proves this. Rheumatic fever left Mrs. Elizabeth Hodgson, of 13 Boundary Street, Halliwell, Bolton, with heart-weakness and general debility; and nothing was able to cure her until she took a course of Bile Beans for Biliousness. In fact, more than once she was believed to be at death's door. To a *Bolton Journal* reporter who investigated the case, Mrs. Hodgson said: "I have worked as a weaver in Bolton Mills since I was thirteen. Ten years ago I had an awful attack of rheumatic fever. The fever left me with shortness of breath, and heart-weakness. My legs and hands were very much swollen, and I could not put my feet to the ground. Later on I was removed to Carlisle Infirmary and nobody expected me to come out alive. As many as seven doctors visited me one day, and some said I had heart-disease. Some time afterwards I was told I might as well leave as I should never be any better. My relatives and friends gave me up then. I became an out-patient at the Bolton Infirmary, but I did not get better, and I kept lingering on, as it were, between life and death.

If I attempted to walk upstairs at night I was so done up with the effort that I had to come back and sit by the fire all night. I dreaded nights coming. I could not eat, I was always short of breath, and work was quite out of the question. One day I took a few Bile Beans, and next morning I felt a great change. I was able to walk about and wash-up, and I felt quite refreshed, and for the first time for a long while I was able to sleep at night. At the week-end I got two boxes of Beans. I continued to take them until, after a comparatively short time, I felt thoroughly fit for work. All the people about were thoroughly amazed at the change in me. Now I have entirely got rid of my old complaints and feel as well as ever I did in my life. I can eat anything, sleep well, go up and down stairs without the slightest difficulty, and am weaving from morning till night, as I did before I had rheumatic fever." Bile Beans for Biliousness are an unfailing remedy for heart-weakness, debility, and the ill-effects of rheumatic and other fevers. They are also invaluable for palpitation, anæmia, sleeplessness, headache, piles, constipation, all female ailments, rheumatism, colds, liver-chill, and all liver and kidney disorders. All chemists stock them, or they may be obtained, post free, from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 London Wall, E.C., by sending prices, one and three-halfpence or two and nine. They are what women want.

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See-saw, Margery Daw.

A Charming Love Story in which Two Kittens Play a Prominent Part.

I had taken the house for two reasons. In the first place it had a beautiful garden, and in the second, the neighbourhood seemed fairly free from cats. My hobby is horticulture. Indeed, I contrive to make a very comfortable income out of my garden, for I specialise in roses, and have had the honour of introducing several new varieties.

Cats I always hated. They are such an unmitigated nuisance to a gardener. One goes to infinite trouble in sowing and watering. Then comes a time of watching and waiting whilst the springing seedlings grow into thriving plants. At last, just as one is expecting a reward for one's toil in the form of a display of bright blossoms, half a dozen beastly cats come over the wall at midnight and hold a concert right in the centre of the cherished bed. Of course everything is completely spoilt.

As I was saying, I took this particular house down at Demford because the district seemed comparatively free from these objectionable quadrupeds. I began work in great hope, and for a time my dream of freedom was unbroken. The early summer saw my garden gay with a grand display of many coloured blossoms, and my heart rejoiced. I was particularly proud of a bed of prize pansies, with which I had taken great pains. Pansies are quaint, pretty flowers, and I had brought together in that particular patch, blooms of almost every known colour and combination.

One morning I strolled into my garden to take the air before breakfast. I was not thinking of anything in particular, and I gazed upwards into the clear blue of the summer sky. Suddenly a slight sound drew my glance to earth. My eye fell upon my pansy bed—the pride of my heart. Right in the very centre of it, surrounded by broken plants and crushed flowers, two black Persian kittens were having a boxing match, while close by, in the middle of a great tuft of blue lobelia, sat the sedate old mother cat, applauding the antics of her progeny.

Fortunately the beasts had not yet become aware of my presence. With the stealth of a Red Indian, I crept back into the house, and went round to the little conservatory where I keep my big garden syringe. I returned quickly and silently, with the instrument charged to its fullest capacity with the special blight-killing preparation I use for my roses. Creeping down behind the yew hedge, I got as close to the pansy bed as possible. Then I took deliberate aim, and fired. The kittens were almost drowned, and the old mother cat came in for a very superior kind of ducking. It took the beasts a second or two to realise what had happened. Then they all went headlong over my neighbour's wall, followed by two good-sized flints that I had managed to kick out of the gravel.

The rout was satisfactory so far as it went. But the enemy was only driven off, and might return at any time. I decided that some more decisive step must be taken. I asked my housekeeper at breakfast who occupied the next door house. I was informed that the individual's name was Miss Daw—Miss Margery Daw. I pondered the matter all that morning, and by noon I had worked myself into a rage. Why should my gardening operations be brought to nought, just because a sour old spinster indulged an inordinate taste for beastly, black pussy cats? I asked myself this question a score of times, and I told myself that the thing was preposterous—absolutely monstrous.

So immediately after lunch I changed my garden coat, took my hat, and went round to call upon Miss Daw. The maid told me that the old dame was in the garden, and led me across the lawn to a shady corner where a hammock was slung amongst the trees. In the hammock reclined a lady whom I presumed was the redoubtable Miss Daw. I advanced with a determined look on my face, strong in the belief that I was a match for any number of old maids when it came to the pinch.

Miss Daw put down her book, and turned to look at me. I verily believe that I gasped. I am quite sure that my jaw dropped, and that I looked silly. For Miss Daw was not an old maid at all, but a very young and a very pretty maid. She had soft golden hair, and the loveliest violet eyes I had ever seen.

"How do you do, Mr. Crawford?" she asked, holding out her hand; "I am sure it is very kind of you to call. You will excuse me rising, won't you? It is so hot, and—well, hammocks are rather awkward things. Do sit down."

I murmured some commonplace, but I was too much overcome by surprise to collect fully my scattered thoughts. I collapsed into the chair Miss Daw indicated, and gazed helplessly at that young lady's trim little figure as it swung slowly to and fro in the hammock. Miss Margery evidently noticed my embarrassment. By way, I suppose, of starting a conversation, she asked:

"Excuse me, Mr. Crawford, but do you happen to know of a good soap for washing cats?"

I must have blushed to the roots of my hair, for she hastened to correct herself.

"I only mean that I want to get a lot of horrid, oily stuff off my two little kittens—Rub and Dub. They are the prettiest little things in the world—or rather, they were. But this morning when I came down to breakfast—oh! you can't think what a sight they were—all covered in disgusting slime. Fanny—that's my maid—and I have been washing them all day, but we can't get the stuff off anyhow. I thought perhaps you might be able to recommend something."

It was just at this moment that Dawson came down the garden. He is a clerk at the local bank, and I had met him on several previous occasions in the billiard room at the Bear Inn. He smiled at Miss Daw in a disgustingly familiar manner, and then nodded to me as though I were quite out of it. I remembered that I had often seen him entering my neighbour's house, but it had never occurred to me to seek a reason for his visits. Now I knew why he had called so often.

He did not seem at all well pleased at my presence. I noticed he kept scowling at me whenever he could turn his face away from Miss Daw. By and by that young lady began to talk of her cats again, and I saw Dawson prick up his ears.

"Cats?" he asked. "In a mess, did you say?"

Then he turned to me with a beastly grin of satisfaction.

"I think you know something about that, Crawford—eh, old man? Didn't I see you squirting those kittens with your syringe this morning?"

I blushed, and began to stammer some lame words of excuse.

"Don't shuffle," cried Dawson, maliciously. "My bedroom window overlooks your garden, and I was witness to the whole disgraceful affair as I stood shaving."

I ground my teeth with rage, but I was powerless to retaliate. In the eyes of the beautiful Miss Daw I knew that I must appear a scoundrel of the blackest dye. I stammered a few words of explanation, pleading the damage the kittens had wrought in my pansy bed. But the only answer I received was a cold look of scorn from those pretty violet eyes. Finally, when I rose to go, Miss Daw seemed to grudge me the handshake which convention demanded. Dawson left with me, grinning with satisfaction. At the gate he said:

"Well, ta-ta, old man. Funny you took so long to make the acquaintance of your neighbour. Nice little bit of goods, isn't she? Orphan—eighteen—coming in for a comfortable little fortune shortly."

Then he slapped me on the back, and continued:

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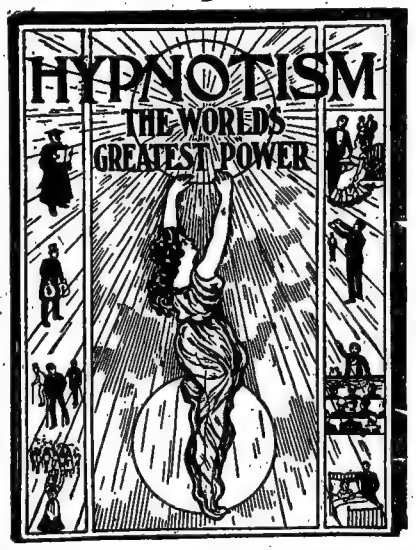

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"But you're too late, old fellow—don't you make any mistake about that! I'm going to marry Miss Daw. I'm the only one in the running. She has not actually promised yet, because she wants her freedom just at present. But I'm the only fellow she cares for—so no poaching, mind! Not that she'd take any notice of a bounder of your stamp, especially after that pussy cat affair."

Dawson chuckled loudly, and I turned away from him in disgusted wrath. Then he laid his hand on my shoulder, and whispered in my ear. I will not repeat his remark; suffice it to say that he spoke of Miss Daw, and that his language was coarse and vulgar. I turned upon him in a moment, and almost before I had time to think what I was doing, I had sent him sprawling into the dusty roadway. He rose snarling, but he was too much of a coward to close with me.

"Never mind, Crawford," he cried, with a foul oath. "It's he who laughs last who laughs loudest, you know. I'll be even with you for this some day."

I left him where he stood, and went into my house.

Two days later as I was gathering roses in my garden, I heard laughter and singing coming over the wall from my neighbour's premises. Miss Daw was evidently well pleased with herself and with the world in general. "See-Saw, Margery Daw," she sang; and I could not help wondering what all the gaiety was about.

At last I went away, and bringing back a ladder, set it against the wall. I assured myself that I had been meaning to trim the creeper all the month, but in my heart of hearts I knew quite well that I really wanted to get another glimpse of my neighbour's pretty face. I climbed up the ladder cautiously, and peeped through the twisted mass of clematis and virginian creeper which topped the wall. What I saw made me clench my fists.

Right in the middle of the lawn Miss Daw had improvised a see-saw, and she was making most vigorous use of this ingenious mechanical contrivance. But it was not the sight of Miss Daw enjoying herself in a somewhat unconventional manner which upset me. What set my teeth on edge was the fact that the individual at the other end of the rising and falling board was none other than that ass Dawson. I nearly fell off the ladder in my mad rage that such a beast should have so completely ingratiated himself with Miss Daw. I put out my hand and clutched at the twining creeper for support. In so doing, I made a good deal of rustling amongst the leaves. Dawson heard me, and looked up.

"Hullo, Crawford!" he cried. "On the look-out for more cats to sprinkle?"

I regarded him with a scowl, and remarked loftily that I was about to trim the creeper.

"Oh, Mr. Crawford," cried Miss Daw, eagerly; "please don't cut that creeper. It's just growing so nicely, and it makes such a nice screen. I do so hate to have things cut back just when they begin to thrive well. Really, you know, that creeper belongs to me quite as much as it does to you. It is on the division wall, you see."

"The root is on my side," I remarked, rather sourly.

Miss Daw looked at me shyly, with a most bewitching smile.

"Won't you leave that creeper alone to please me, Mr. Crawford?" she asked. "Come now, let us make a bargain. You made my kittens in a most horrible mess the other day. You had some excuse, because Rub and Dub had been playing in your pansy bed. I looked over the wall after you had told me about it, and the pansies were really quite spoilt. Still, you made me very angry by messing my pussies so."

"Really—really, I'm most awfully sorry," I pleaded. "I did not know until afterwards that the kittens belonged to you."

Miss Daw held up her little forefinger to point her remarks.

"Look here," she began; "I'll promise to forgive and forget all about your unkindness to my kittens, if you will promise to let that creeper grow all through the summer."

All this time, Miss Daw and that ass Dawson had been poised one at each end of the gently swaying see-saw. When Miss Daw had finished speaking, she looked at me through half-closed eyelids in such a quaint way that I had no choice but to do as she asked.

"I promise," I said.

Dawson broke into an ugly chuckle.

"Until next time!" he cried rudely.

Miss Daw sprang lightly down from her end of the see-saw, and at the same moment Dawson came to the ground with a resounding bump. As he was quite unprepared for the catastrophe, the result was really most deplorable. He picked himself up ruefully, whilst Miss Daw laughed at his discomfort.

"That was a shabby trick to serve a fellow!" he cried, angrily.

"I really could not help it, you know," said Miss Daw, sarcastically. "I was so much surprised when you threw doubt on Mr. Crawford's word that I jumped off almost without thinking."

"I'll teach you manners one of these days," growled Dawson.

Miss Margery dropped him a mock curtsey.

"Perhaps you'll never have the chance," she cried, laughing.

Dawson mumbled something which I could not catch. I fancy it was an oath. Miss Daw stamped her foot.

"You are very rude," she said. "Please go away, and don't come back until you have learnt manners."

Dawson went slowly out of the garden, muttering to himself in an ugly manner. When he had slammed the gate behind him, Miss Daw looked up at me.

"That man's a thorough cad," she said; "I hate him."

"Then why ever do you encourage him," I asked, in surprise.

Miss Daw hung her head in such a manner that her big sun hat hid her face from me.

"I don't," she answered bluntly.

"But," said I, "I saw you playing see-saw with him only a moment ago. If that's not encouraging a man, I don't know what is."

"It was not to encourage him. It was to—to—*encourager les autres*, as the French say."

"To encourage the others—I see," I cried, with a smile. "But surely," I added, "the others would have come without—without—that kind of encouragement?"

"Not the one I wanted," said Miss Daw, very softly.

I nearly tumbled off the wall in my excitement.

"Margery," I said, gently.

"Yes, dear—for ever and ever so long," she answered, still hanging her head.

"What a fool I've been," I cried. "Why—I thought you hated me because I doused your kittens."

Margery lifted her eyes to mine, and I think the violet was dimmed by happy tears. Then she stretched out her arms.

"Won't you come now?" she asked.

I jumped off the wall into a sweet briar bush, but I did not notice the scratching I got until hours later. **A. H. B.**

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By Madge Morris.

[I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of Short Stories.*]*

Giggling.

"Embarrassed" is a young man of twenty, who has a kind of idea that he is not bad looking. At the same time, whenever he meets girls in the streets they start giggling. He has endured this so long that he has become desperate, and writes to me for an explanation of the problem "Why do girls giggle?" Is it, he asks, because they see something ridiculous in his appearance, or out of sheer intellectual emptiness? Well, "Embarrassed," it may be a little of both. Perhaps there *is* something in your appearance which is funny—I don't say to the world at large, but to the average girl. Girls are very observant of the merest trifles in a man's dress or appearance, and if they can possibly fix on some object, say an open mouth, a fixed grin, an unshaven face, or perhaps an unusual hat or tie, they are unconsciously driven to laughter.

❦❦❦

Perhaps "Embarrassed" is not always free from something of the kind. On the other hand, I must say many girls giggle without the slightest reason. This is not always due to "intellectual emptiness," but to "nervous fulness." The giggle with a girl is largely akin to hysterics. They often do it and are quite unconscious of any cause. Sometimes even serious things affect them in this way, and I have known the most gentle-hearted girls burst out laughing when people are talking of the death of a relative or some other subject the reverse of frivolous. Giggling is a nervous reaction after one has been strung up, so "Embarrassed" must not be too sensitive about it on the part of young girls. They grow out of it in time. However, if I were he, I should take an opportunity of telling them, if he knows the girls in question, that the habit is very silly, and perhaps they may see it for themselves if he puts it to them in a dignified way.

❦❦❦

A Stolen Husband.

I have had a very long and pathetic letter from "Clues" (Southsea), whose husband has been made love to by a hospital nurse. The affair has been going on for some time, and though "Clues" knows they are fond of one another, she is sure there is no faithlessness on his part. Their present life is one of misery, but she is certain he would be happy with her if the other woman were out of the way. How can the affair be terminated?

❦❦❦

I can only suggest that, under the circumstances, my correspondent should invite her husband to either terminate once for all his association with the other lady, or consent to her placing the matter in the hands of a lawyer, with a view to proceedings for a deed of separation.

I knew just such a case as this years ago, only the wavering one was in this case the wife, not the husband. The husband had known for a long time of his wife's devotion to another man, but was so fond of her himself, that he even felt a sympathy with her, and a desire to grant her her wishes. He suggested a deed of separation, and the two signed it in a solicitor's office. She stopped with her mother for a week after the signature, when she relented and returned to him, admitting that she had been absolutely wrong, and that his own conduct had been so chivalrous that it had touched her heart. They have since lived together in unbroken matrimonial happiness.

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Playing Gooseberry.

"Ena" has been staying with a friend, and is called upon to be continually playing "gooseberry." That is to say, the friend, Amy, is receiving attentions from a young man, but Amy's parents never allow her to go out unless "Ena" accompanies her. They have a kind of suspicion that the young man has a little way of placing himself in the way of meeting her when he gets the chance, which is perfectly true. He has. How should "Ena" act when they meet him, and both indicate by hints that they wish to be alone?

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If "Ena" thinks that the attachment is quite innocent, and that the couple are really fond of each other, she should play "gooseberry" in a sportsmanlike way. It is quite possible for her to be with them and yet, so to speak, not with them. Supposing they are in a country lane, and the young man overtakes them, what is to prevent "Ena" suddenly discovering an intensely interesting plant or flower, and tarrying behind to examine it and make deductions? Or, why could she not take with her an interesting book, and when the couple find themselves together, she might walk at a safe distance, urging that she is really so absorbed in the story that she hopes they will not mind her reading. There are several ways of playing "gooseberry" without being a nuisance

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The Dear Old Ladies.

"Evelyn" is a very pretty girl, but does not quite see why this should be taken as a pretext by old ladies for inundating her with insane conversations at dances, parties, or concerts. At a recent concert she wished to hear the music, but a dear old lady on her left persisted in talking to her on uninteresting topics, out of apparent desire to patronise her. How should she act? If rude to the lady she must offend her parents, but if polite she has to endure this sort of thing indefinitely. I am sorry for "Evelyn," but must tell her that for the present, at any rate, she must bear gently with the dear old ladies. These gentle creatures have an idea that it is their bounden duty to talk nicely to a young girl, and, as they mean well, it is not right or discreet for "Evelyn" to offend them.

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There is a way of appearing to be interested in conversation without having to be a real partaker in it, and this all young girls should gracefully cultivate. When an elderly lady starts in this manner, "Evelyn" should wear her sweetest smile, and should answer each remark with a "yes" "no," "really," or "you don't mean it?" expressed in terms of intense interest. It is quite easy to become proficient at this in time, and "Evelyn" should practise it. Old ladies must not on any account be offended by their juniors. They mean well.

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Love's Signature.

"A. S." is seventeen, but years ago had made a vow with a young man that she would be his wife. Later on he made her sign a letter stating that she would always be faithful to him, and that if he died, she would never marry another. When she asked him to sign a similar statement he refused. Does this suggest that his love for her is not as durable as hers for him? He is, I should add, twenty-four years of age. It does certainly look as though he were willing to bind another to an agreement but not be bound himself. I should tell him, "A. S.," that you withdraw your written statement unless he agrees to make another on his own account. One can always supersede a declaration by another. At the same time, I do not think it argues much for his belief in you for him to insist on your signing such a statement. The knot of true love should not require a pen and ink statement that it is tied, as it should be one of those things that admit of no doubt.

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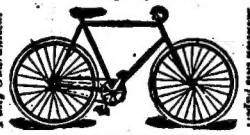

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